

IBN 'ARABI

Divine Governance of the
Human Kingdom

*At-Tadbirat al-ilahiyyah
fi islah al-mamlakat al-insaniyyah*

12 vhs deb

ABOUT DIVINE GOVERNANCE

This book is one of the early books of Ibn 'Arabi written in all probability around 1194/590H in Andalusia, certainly before his migration to the eastern realms of the Islamic world in 1201/598H. He explains the cause which induced him to write this guide of how to fare in this life, if one was meant to live it as God's supreme creation: "When I visited the house of Shaikh Abu Muhammad al Mururi (al Mawruri), I found a book called "The Secret of Secrets" (Sirrul Esrar) written by Hakim (Aristotle) who was too old to accompany Zulkarneyn (Alexandre the Great) in his campaigns. The book contained instructions of how to rule the world.

"Ebu Muhammad told me, 'This book is about ruling the world. What I want you to do is to write a book about the governance of the human kingdom, of how to govern our own selves where our real salutation rests.'

22 for author's title.

"Upon this request, I wrote this book in the city of Murur (Mawrur) in less than 4 days. Hakim's is one fourth or one third of my book in length. There is much more circumspection, information, and meaning in the management of one human being and governing of a worldly kingdom, which Hakim (Aristotle) had ignored in his book.

"This book will serve those kings who are the servants of their servants, and lead the ones who realize that this life is but a road leading to the hereafter."

FOREWORD

May God forgive the faults of His humble servant, Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn al-'Arabi at-Ta'i al-Andalusi. All prayer and praise belong to God, who has raised humanity from their limited existence and knowledge to the realization of Truth.

At first He created man as an atom in the shape of a beautiful jewel, upon which He gazed with love and compassion. When His sight fell upon it the jewel melted into water, and each drop of this water burst with divine knowledge.

Then He poured this water upon the roots of a sapling made out of divine harmony, which gave it the life of knowledge and beauty. He named the tree Human Being.

He gave the human being the faculties of seeing and feeling. He also made the human the wisest of His creation, teaching it all there is to know in His creation. He made it powerful and sovereign over everything. Then He gave the human being the Mind. And God kept man's secrets within His secrets, and hid his origin and nature within His Beautiful Names: the Gentle, and the Mighty One.

Next He presented the human being to the rest of His creation. When they gazed upon him, they felt the presence of divine wisdom, although God had hidden that in the infinite width and depth of His creation. All creation revered the human, and man felt pride in the power that God had placed in him.

Then God manifested His own power upon him.

every human is a mirror
- when power reveals himself
- when he is not revealed
- when he is (not) a mirror

Man tried to escape from his Creator in fear of His fire, His awe-inspiring grandeur, and His wrath. But God caught him gently, without his even feeling it, and dipped him time after time into the waters of the azure ocean of hope. Thus the divine power revived in man again, and found its right place within him.

God showed man his place in the universe and traced his life upon this earth. He also set him free, not binding him to any place or time, and covered him under the veil of protection of an eternal life.

Thus He placed man above even His angels. He made them prostrate in front of him in allegiance. That is how God taught man His Names.

God made the human being His deputy in the universe and assured his success and predominance over everything. And He gave him Intellect as his prime minister, to help him govern his realm. To him he gave the secret of the word, made him speak even though a red-hot coal should touch his tongue. He gave a staff into his hand, a staff that swallows the snakes of the sorcerers: with that staff He broke the backs of all the tricks of all liars and illusionists.

He gave the human being the measuring stick, as a warning, to differentiate the great and the small. And man learned to fear Him.

Then God took the benefits of His whole creation and divided them among humanity as He saw fit. He put signs on the backs of each of His destined blessings, which come to all. The heart knows these signs, but the mind does not.

Then the human being was sent to his home—in the middle of the desert, without a drop of water—and was



taught to seek the secrets under the earth. He taught these to others in turn, and turned the desert into a garden.

God taught man to do, while he could not do. God did for him what he thought he did. God gave all that he has to man only as a bridge to pass over. Blessed is he who passes this bridge in safety.

God knows how to keep His creation clean, or to sully it with what He puts in it, as He wishes. It is all calculated. This world is a testing ground for the believer and the unfaithful one alike.

God has created His kingdom in the human being as a pulpit from which He may be recalled in this universe. He has planted His divine knowledge in the man, and covered it, and forbidden him to divulge His knowledge as his own. He tells man to look out to the skies to see His signs, in so many heavens filled with so many stars, all swimming in the infinite ocean of space in accordance with His ordinances—while all of it is already within man.

All His creation streams between God's two feet, fast-flowing currents of fear and hope. That Eternal Calligrapher, in His infinite wisdom, wrote under His right foot:

Whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it.

(Zilzal, 7)

And under His left foot:

Whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.

(Zilzal, 8)

He who has wisdom and whose eyes of the heart are open knows he can but obey Him, and thank Him for that which he has received—whether little or much—and seek the treasures of Truth that God has hidden in him. He must contemplate his life and his death and be aware and prepared, for he will die the way he lived and be brought back to life the way he died.

Life will be taken away at an unexpected time and in an unexpected way, and it will be given back on the Day of Judgment. On a moonless night darkness hides all that is visible, but when the moon shines again, everything is again seen. This is a reminder of the sleep of heedlessness that hides reality from man's inner eye. Yet if God so wished, He could shed light over the darkness and even upon nothingness, as when the earth faces the moon and the moon faces the sun.

When God gave a staff into the hand of Moses, he struck the rock to test its secret, and water burst out of the rock. See how a frail piece of branch broke the hard rock and brought forth a stream of running water! Who was it, behind the veil of secrets, who hit the stone?

There is a whole treasure of secrets in the pure center of the human being. And what is it but heedlessness that prevents man from being thankful for the God-given treasures in his essence? Who but the godless would kill the human by denying its essence?

Woe to the hypocrite who belittles himself, pretending to be an ascetic! Indeed, his baseness is in his pretense. Why does he have to humiliate his very existence? If he only realized his own existence—even as a hypocrite—instead of denying it, the awareness of his own

reality might balance his bad intention, and might save him from the punishment of the Hereafter.

The divine secret placed within you will be a reality only if you know it, find it, become it. Remember always that your Lord has created you only to bow to the Truth all the days and nights of your life.

This little book contains vast knowledge of great benefit to all. It is gathered from the gardens of Eden and from divine providence. It is meant to be a guide to believers. There are neither conjectures nor doubts in it. Even if some may find faults in it, they will concede that they are small, fine, and beautiful. I call this book Divine Governance of the Human Kingdom.

The book is divided into twenty-one chapters. Each section contains instructions for achieving unity, the Lord's gift to humankind. They show how to keep order within the divine order while improving ourselves; how to guide our lives in the right way; how to protect His kingdom, which is the human being, from oblivion; how to rule it in the way that it is meant to be ruled, by the soul that the Lord has placed in it as His deputy. This book is such a fountain that both high and low will be able to quench their thirst by drinking from it. For those who are able to see beneath the evident, there are signs that, if followed, will lead to the Source. For those who see the surface, there are things as plain as could be.

The essence of the mystic path is offered in this book. It is a path for all who wish to reach the doorstep of divine benevolence.

Whoever treads this path will walk in the company of the Owner of this world and His retinue of friends, helpers, and servants. All are intent upon the same goal,

they have joy in their hearts, they share their due and are satisfied with their lot. On the way they will realize the reason for their existence, as well as their relations with and superiority to the rest of the creation. They will find that all and everything in the vast universe is within the human being—all this evident multiplicity made pure, concentrated, and unified, and fitted into the human person, with not a single thing left out.

Thus the whole creation in all its perfection is manifested in humankind. We are placed, in the connecting stage of our corporeal existence, between the divine attributes of Might and Grace. We are granted generosity, which we may dispense freely, and power to rule over all and everything. The wise who see the proofs of this phenomenon know it to be true, and say that there is nothing in creation more perfect than the human being whose purity and wisdom are protected by our Creator, the Lord of Beneficence and Compassion.

May God keep you close and obedient to Him: know that the Lord has created the creation in twos in order to have Himself distinguished from all else, so that His name, and His existence, is the only One. Thus it is known who is the Lord and who is the servant.

And the Lord taught man the truth of himself and the trust He leaves in his hand. In God's Holy Book it is written:

And He it is who spread the earth and made in it firm mountains and rivers. And of all fruits He has made them in pairs, two of every kind. He makes the night to cover the day. Surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect.

(Ra'd, 3)

Humankind is like the fruits He created in pairs. We are fed as He feeds the fruit tree. He makes us useful to feed others, like the tree. The tree ages and dies and is reborn from its own seed. That is our way, too. And as the tree has to be tended, so must we; as its fruits must be collected, so must ours. Otherwise our existence will have no meaning.

The divine wisdom, placed in abundance in the human being, leads humanity on the path destined for it. In that, we are superior to the rest of the creation, for we are blessed with God's beauty, wisdom, and secrets. The human being is like unto everything that exists. Tiny though we may be, we are the microcosm of the macrocosm. The whole universe is in us, and we find proofs in God's words:

On the earth are signs for those of assured faith,
as also in yourselves. Will you not then see?

(*Zariyat, 20-21*)

We will show them Our signs in the horizons and
in themselves until they know that it is the truth.

(*Sajda, 53*)

We have not created the heavens and the earth
and what is between them in vain.

(*Sad, 270*)

Did you then think that We had created you for
no purpose?

(*Mu'minun, 115*)

Between the two His command descends, [that
you may know that God is Powerful over all
things, and that God comprehends all things in
knowledge.]

(*Talaq, 12*)

"Between the two" means between the Lord and His faithful servant. He is the one who

teaches man that which he knows not

(*'Alaq, 95*)

and gives him what he needs.

For the heedful there are many things in the greater universe, yet all are interrelated. One can find the same in the microcosm of the human being—for instance, in the relation between the soul, who is the deputy of God, and others assigned to rule.

For instance the body hair is similar to the forests. And body fluids—some sweet, like saliva, some bitter, like tears, some poisonous, like nasal secretions—all are like the waters of this planet.

As the whole universe is created from the primary elements of earth, water, fire, and air, so is the body of man. The Creator says:

He it is that created you from dust.

(*Mu'min, 67*)

Further He says:

We have created them from clay

(*Saffat, 11*)

which is a mixture of earth and water.

Then He says:

We created the human being . . . of formed
dried mud

(Hijr, 26)

which is a mixture of earth and water and air.

Then He says:

He created the human being from sounding
[fired] clay

(Rahman, 12)

indicating the fire in man.

Corresponding to the winds blowing from the four
directions, the human body also has four powers: attrac-
tion, repulsion, retention, and digestion.

In this world there are both wild and domesticated
animals. In us there is anger, vengeance, the desire to
overwhelm, to war and make mischief. At the same time,
we work to obtain sustenance, to marry, to raise children,
and so forth. God says:

The unfaithful aim to gain their living, to have
fun; like animals they eat, [not knowing where
such heedlessness would lead.] Fire will be
their abode.

(Muhammad, 12)

God's angels roam in this world. Man also attempts
to purify himself with sincerity, faithfulness, and worship.
The universe holds things both visible and invisible. So it
is in man, who has an exterior and an interior being. In this

world there are the heavens and the earth. The human
being also ascends and descends.

If you look at what is around you and seek what cor-
responds to it in you, you will find the Divine Truth.

You will see only temporal things, some with a
shorter life, and some with a much longer one. But if you
consider these as symbols, through your religion you will
find that which corresponds to them in eternity. In this way
you will gather figurative attributes to their corresponding
metaphysical meanings.

Examples of this are in the Holy Qur'an, which has
a figurative meaning comprehensible to all who speak
Arabic. As the Prophet said, "The Lord revealed the
Qur'an in the language that I speak." Yet there is also a
hidden meaning. For instance, we read *washta'ala ar-
ra'su shayba* (Maryam, 3) which literally signifies "my
head caught fire," but the meaning is, "I have aged, my
hair has turned white." Then there is *ka-ramadin ishtad-
dat bihi ar-rih* (Ibrahim, 18), which signifies "like ashes
hurried by wind," but means that the deeds of the unfaith-
ful are scattered like ashes on a windy day. There are
many other examples whose meanings are different from
what they seem.

Today, as always, the Sufis aim to understand the
real meanings of things, beyond their appearances.
Whenever your eye rests upon any existent entity in this
world of matter around you, seek its original attribute, its
essential meaning, which will explain it or transform it.
When you thus find the proof of its existence, you will
have found its true reality.

When the eye of the heart recognizes the divine
attribute manifested in a thing, it also recognizes the

equivalent manifestation existing inside us.⁴ Then that thing is no longer outside and separate from us, but is known as a part of the human being. Therefore we assign it its name from among our own names.

A donkey is known to be stubborn; a stubborn man is like that donkey. A lion is powerful, king of the forest; a man with those attributes is said to be "like a lion." When we look at the sun or the full moon, we can associate these qualities with a person and say, "his mind is bright, his spirit is warm." As you see, the qualities contained in human character may be as base as a donkey or as high as the sun.

Ignorance and subjection to the ego abase a person. Intelligence and knowledge raise a person to perfection. But there are eclipses in this ascension, which are caused by the shadow cast upon the moon by the earth. Just so, our love for and attachment to the world and the desires of the flesh cause the interruption of our evolution. But just as the world is brought alive by sunshine, so the human being is made living by the divine light reflected from his soul.

When we compare all existence to what exists in us, and God's attributes manifest in the macrocosm to what is manifest in us as the microcosm, then we see the enormity, almost the infinity, of the 18,000 universes, and the small, limited existence of the human being, who has a very short span of life. Sometimes a difficulty may arise. We may lose hope that this path, this trend of thought, will bring us to salvation, felicity, and perfection.

To eliminate this doubt, it is good to remember two conditions which are our birthright, and which describe our responsibility as a human being.

The first of these is the promise our soul made to its Creator on the day He created all the souls. He asked us,

Am I not your Lord?

And we all responded,

Indeed, You are.

(A'raf, 172)

That is the original promise of the human essence to God, and it exists in every one of us.

The other condition is a threat, a prediction, a menace, with which we are also born: that whether we are able to choose the right over the wrong will make all the difference in our life, first here and then Hereafter.

Both the promise in our souls and our fear of error in telling right from wrong arise from the macrocosm—and even beyond. They come directly from the origin of all and everything, including the right and the wrong and divine justice itself.

If we listen to the soul which has given its promise to its Lord, and follow what it ordains for us throughout our lives, then we will find ourselves obeying what God commands and forbids. All the rest of the created universe follows its destiny without having a choice. It is by following our soul that we are at one with the divine harmony.

In the prophets whom God has sent since the creation of humanity, and especially in the last and seal of them, Muhammad (may God's peace and blessings be upon him), we are given a clear voice that speaks guidance to our souls. And although prophethood has ended

now until the end of time, in every age the world will contain a spiritual Pole. His name and place may not be known to all, yet he is the guide of the time, the divine representative in whom God's ordinances are manifest. All outer and inner, material and spiritual decisions in the governance of life come finally from him. Some he blesses with love and compassion and protection. Some he punishes. He is both inside of you and outside of you. When you meet him you will know him. If you do not know him, then he is not there. To indicate the way to find him is the purpose of this book.

Sufism is the path leading to the most beautiful secrets, leading to the conversion and transformation of your state. Only those who have a great need, a great wish, will seek and find this path. From those who have doubt, fear, and denial in their hearts, it will always be hidden.

Denial and fear are a result of not knowing. The terror of the unknown is the greatest weapon in the hand of our personal devil. Therefore this book aims to make the unknown known, answering questions in the minds of all seekers in the simplest and most understandable way.

We hope that the reader will find the desire to submit to the greater will of God, for submission is the key to the secrets he seeks, which then will bring him peace. The foundation of Sufism is submission to, and affirmation of, the will of God.

God's peace and blessings be upon our Master, the Messenger of Allah, who never said a word from himself, nor for his own sake. All that he said and did was said and done by God. That is why the ones who had faith in him and followed him were attached to him with the submission of a slave. They never sought proofs or justifications

for what they were asked to do. Few asked him questions, and his Lord stopped them by sending the following verse:

O faithful, do not ask questions about things which, if made plain to you, would cause you pain.

(Ma'idah, 101)

O seeker, my companion on the path to truth, as you follow this path you may find many obstacles and oppositions. The first of these will try to convince you to question your guide—Why? What is the proof of the truth? How does it compare to what we know? How do you know?

The saint Junayd al-Baghdadi said that if a new thing appearing now is compared to what was in the past, that new thing will disappear without leaving a trace. Do not listen to a teacher if there is an inconsistency between what he says and what he is. If you need a proof of the validity of what you are asked to do, seek it in your own experience and in the result of what you have done. But to find it, you will need a tall ladder to climb, and that ladder also is stored within yourself. When you discover it, the truth will be your own.

Sharif al-Rida, grandson of Hadrat 'Ali, the Gate of Knowledge, (may God be pleased with them both), used to pray plaintively to his Lord, "O Lord, if I do not declare the essence of the knowledge You have given me, but keep it to myself, people say to me, 'We worship these idols. Which idol do you worship?' But were I to declare what I know, then the Muslims would think that shedding my blood is lawful; they would think that their worst sins are better than the pearls of knowledge I would give them!"

So when you are asked about the validity of this path you follow, ask your questioners in turn, "What is the proof of the taste and sweetness of honey?" They will have to concede that the proof of the sweetness of honey is known only by tasting it.

Imagine that someone has built a house away from the eyes of the world. When that house is finished, a person who knows the building trade comes and inspects it. Afterwards he tells people what he has seen. Is it right to ask that expert in building, who has fully explained everything about a house he has seen himself, "What is the proof of the truth of your description?" "What is the proof of the existence of such a house?" Is it not sufficient proof that the one whose profession is to build has inspected the house and described it in detail?

Those who believe the one who has seen the house, and appreciate what he has described, can always go and ask the permission of the owner of the house to enter it themselves.

The ones who know, know by following the prescriptions of the Prophet. Knowledge is only acquired by people who love and fear God. If you see such a person—who is devout, stays within his limits, and behaves as if he is always in the presence of his Lord—listen to him, agree with him, and submit to him, even if the things he says surpass your understanding. God says:

God chooses for His [special] mercy whomever He wills

(*Baqarah, 105*)

and:

He bestows wisdom upon whomever He wills.
(*Baqarah, 269*)

About Khidr, who was charged to teach divine justice to Moses, (may His blessings be upon them), God says:

We taught him a knowledge from Our own presence.

(*Kahf, 66*)

When God gives His secrets to someone, no one has the right to question that person, for it is like questioning the will and act of the Giver.

One day one of the Companions of the Messenger of God asked why the sunset prayer consists of three cycles while the night prayer is four, and why some prayers are recited silently while others are said aloud. The Prophet did not answer, because these prescriptions of the Lord belong to Him alone, and were not decided by His Prophet. His silence was the proof of the truth of how Muslims are to pray.

When such a question comes to mind, it indicates a doubt as to the authenticity of a truth. Know that it is a sign of lack of faith. Therefore neither ask, nor respond, nor analyze and doubt when you hear the word of God. If you do not fully understand it, ask God, as He indicates in the Holy Book:

And say: O my Lord, increase me in knowledge.
(*Ta Ha, 114*)

This prayer is a proof of your sincerity.

Faith is such a mirror that, if it is sincere, when spots and dirt covering it are cleansed, you will see yourself clearly in it. Will you see yourself as beautiful or not? It does not matter.

If someone comes up behind you and his face is reflected in a mirror, you know he is there, although you have not looked upon him directly—you have only seen his reflection. That is how one sees things, usually. We only look upon the reflection of reality.

We know, logically, that a thing reflected in a mirror must exist. But to see accurately, one's mirror of the heart must be trustworthy, cleansed, spotless, without any dirt that might distort what is reflected in it. What is the process of the cleansing of the mirror of the heart? It is an unending battle with one's ego, whose purpose is to distort reality.

When the mirror is cleansed, the heart tells of all those mysteries which were hitherto hidden. The pure heart does not lie. It cannot talk of things that it has not seen.

It is the mind that listens to the talk of the heart. The truly intelligent person is the one whose mind submits to his heart and is in agreement with it. An action taken in accordance with the decrees submitted by such a mind is a lawful action.

The mind by itself may be lacking. In some circumstances it misses the parts of the whole, thus diminishing the whole. At times it even stops, or it misconstrues. In that case it may try to shake the supporting columns of the religious law, or the foundations of the Unity. But it will be unable even to touch them. What the prophets and saints saw and tell about is what was revealed to their hearts. Thus it lies beyond the realm of mind. The Sufi is the one who knows this, and accepts what they say.

The mind meets with opposition and denial from those who listen to it. Whatever is opposed and denied returns to it and belongs to it. But that criticism which the Sufi suffers at times does not belong to him. He is clear of it.

If a Sufi encounters someone who is lacking in understanding, he protects him before that lack of understanding destroys him. Yet there may not be time to save him; one dies the way one lives and one is brought back to life, on the Day of Judgment, in the way one died.

Beware! Don't be heedless of what is being taught here. Turn the spotlight on yourself, and let the one who is seen, submit. Save yourself from the obscurity of denial. Opt for freedom, and with this new freedom, fight the tyranny of your ego. Sit on the throne of Intellect. Put the crown of service on your head. Judge, not with preconceptions, but by the reality of the Now. The truth is in the present.

When you tell what you know, look at the ones who listen. Observe: they will tell what they heard. You will see yourself, hearing from them whatever you told them.

When you see that happen, it no longer matters whether you were there or not. Then even if you are there, you are not there. Our Master, the Prophet of God, spoke the words of his Lord and said:

My loving servant comes close to Me by the extra worship of serving My creation for My sake and in My name. Then I love him. And when I love him, I become the eyes with which he sees and the ears with which he hears.

When the Lord becomes your eyes, can anything be hidden from them? When the Lord becomes your ears, can there be an end to what you will hear?

That is the time to stand at the limits of your being and teach what you have heard. Praise your Lord for what He has taught to you. There is no end to knowledge. Don't ever stop learning.

May God keep you among the servants whom He has chosen to know His secrets. And may we say Amen with the might and glory that the All-Mighty and Glorious has bestowed upon us.

CHAPTER 1

THE SOUL: THE DIVINE DEPUTY, THE KING OF THE HUMAN REALM

It is a fact that the universal soul within man is the ruler of the human being and the deputy of the Creator, for the Lord of Humanity said:

Behold, Thy Lord said to the angels, "I will create a deputy on earth..."

(Baqarah, 30)

As man is created central to the universe and is the microcosm to the macrocosm, the soul is central to the human being and is the deputy of the Lord. To protect ourselves from the criticism and assault of those who look upon life and the world only from the outside and who are blind to their outer and inner selves, we must explain what we mean.

God, the Ultimate Truth, guides us to Truth and shows us the Truth through the wisdom bestowed upon us by the ones who trod this path before us and who have entered this realm and understood what they saw.

May God shed light upon your inner eye, O follower of this path:

Know that the first being that God invented and thought of and created is a singular basic essence which is not formed into any creed or principle, yet which appears to exist in the next creed or principle. Though some philosophers claim that the first creation is a single being

because only one can come out of one, if God had so wished, His will and power could have created many beings at once. To think otherwise would mean that God's will is limited and His power is lacking. God has the ability to create any and all things at once and there is nothing to prevent it. What is perhaps to be inquired into is the location of the source and the place of the divine power. If there is a proof that the first creation is a single being, that also is only His wish and His will.

I, Muhammad the son of 'Ali, Muhyiddin al-'Arabi say:

The rationalists explain their thoughts about the soul as God's deputy in different ways. Some called it the Clear Book of Evidence. Some called it the Divine Throne, others called it the Mirror of Truth. It is a fact that the Creator bestowed upon every human being a different attribute out of His own divine attributes and a different influence from His own esteem and rendered him special.

May God's pleasure be upon Muhammad Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, who said on the subject of the human soul as the deputy of God: The deputy which God sent as the master of all things is the soul, and the soul is not created, it is directly from the realm of God's command. The Sufis have found the proof of al-Ghazali's words in the Holy Qur'an, where it is written:

They will ask you of the soul. Say: 'The spirit is from the realm of my Lord's command.'

(Bani Isra'il, 85)

Therefore, the soul is under the orders of God. It is within the knowledge of the Lord and is revealed by the Lord.

Thus the man of knowledge, believing that the origin of the soul is divine, believes that it received God's orders directly from His realm of power without any intermediary. And each such command is meant to fulfill certain functions. Thus, the First Cause named by the philosophers is the Absolute Existence of the One and Only. If another existence attached to the causal existence is added to Him, it becomes a second cause, and it becomes the first creation. In the created universe, every existence is the effect of a preceding cause. It is said in the Holy Qur'an:

Is it not His to create and to govern? Blessed be God the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds.

(A'raf, 54)

He has created all and everything with His knowledge. Know that He both creates and commands the created. The Lord of the universe is eternal, the nature of His essence is divine. He is One without any other, the Lord, Unique, Mighty, and Glorious. If we believe that the universe is created by Him and governed by Him and that the soul of man is His extension, His command to set and keep order in the universe, the real meaning is learned and understood and no more has to be said. God is the One who tells the truth and leads to the straight path.

Yet I must add, may God's pleasure be upon them, some of the rationalists said that the soul was not the first creation but the most appropriate of all possibilities, the first addition. Yet they named it with the attribute of a created thing. To name a thing with an attribute characteristic to it is not far-fetched. In fact, in the designation of the

first created matter, the Lord has created things in twos. One He created without a cause or intermediary which in turn caused the creation of another. God did not create the creation in jest, but created it as necessary causes. The truth is, the first existence was created without a preceding cause and that existence became the cause of the creation of the others. Yet another cause to be considered is the preceding thought, such as the thought of satisfying hunger preceding eating or the thought of quenching one's thirst before drinking, wishing to solve a problem before learning, to wish to do the right thing before taking action, the thought of God's reward instigating a good deed, the fear of His punishment to be considered before sinning, and so forth.

Therefore, when the thinkers realized this and penetrated into the meaning of it, they named the Intellect as the first created matter, and as they didn't see any opposition to it in Islam, they called it the Throne of God. The Intellect that they called it the Throne is because it is conceived as the center of the universe and the source of all that God has commanded and forbidden. It is as if the gravitational center of the whole universe, to which everything is connected. Its place is conceived to be on the ninth heaven.

The soul of man, the deputy of God, is surrounded by the microcosm which is called the human being.

God, most gracious, is firmly established on the Throne (of authority).

(Ta Ha, 5)

There is a hidden meaning in this verse, to be told

to the ones who follow this path so that they taste the sweet taste of the inner meaning which Sufism seeks. The word "Throne" is balanced by the word "grace," and there is a level of perfect balance of God's attribute and the place of the source of power. The Throne is the place where man's soul resides. The only way in which God's magnificence can be realized is by ascending to that place. The Throne is in the vicinity of the Names "God" and "The All-Gracious." Think of Him in any of His beautiful Names. Call on Him in which ever way you think of Him. All the beautiful names and attributes are about Him and are His, and He is as you conceive Him. And the level upon which the Throne is set is the ultimate level that can be reached by humanity.

Our Master, the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, said: "God created man in His own image," meaning in the image of His Grace. The divine station, called the Throne, is the station of God's essence, and that which the Throne carries is God's divine attributes. O you who know the right from the wrong, think about this. O you who follow the path and thought you were lost for a moment, be heedful, come to yourself, see the inheritor within you and favor it. God tells the truth and leads to the right path.

Some Sufis who know these secrets call the soul the first teacher. It is so for the ones who are conscious of it and are under its command. They realize that although none of the creation accepted to bear the divine trust, the human being bore it.

The soul's relation to the microcosm is as central as Adam's to the macrocosm: God taught Adam all His Names. As it is said in the Holy Qur'an:

And He taught Adam the nature of all things.
(Baqarah, 31)

Adam is the being within the two hands of the Creator, whom He taught all His beautiful Names, His own attributes, preferring him to His angels. Then, addressing His angels, He said:

Tell me the nature of these if ye are right.
(Baqarah, 31)

To which the angels answered:

Glory to Thee, of knowledge we have none
save what Thou has taught us.
(Baqarah, 32)

When God asked Adam to be the first teacher and His deputy, teaching His angels the names they did not know, He asked His angels to prostrate in front of Adam as people prostrate toward the Kaaba. In this world, if those who turn toward the Kaaba to prostrate are prostrating to the Kaaba, may God save them. They would then be guilty of the unforgivable sin, setting up partners to God. The prostration round the circumference of a circle whose center is the Kaaba symbolizes submission to that which is central. The prostration of the angels to Adam is the respect and humbleness of the student toward the teacher. When a person prostrates toward the Kaaba it shows that he confirms what he has learned from the All-knowing, and acknowledges his inability to do, his nothingness, his obedience. But it is also an honor bestowed, for prostration is a clear proof of human will. It is a gift of the Creator that

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He gives to whom He wishes. Take heed, for here is another beautiful secret to contemplate. Did the Creator examine the attributes of His creation before He named them? If He did not how could He name things which He has not seen and examined?

We know that the Lord taught man as His deputy the names of all and everything and then charged him to teach these to His angels. He could have only taught him the names of things before him. To think that He taught him what He taught him from a distance, unseen, is a false conception. We believe that the Lord knew the things He named, for all the secrets of the universe are from Him and in Him and the Lord knows Himself. And He gave the secrets of the macrocosm which He created to the microcosm which He created so that the latter know and profit from them.

The divine sign of this is given to us by the word hayula, the chaos which preceded the creation, before things were named. Some Sufis named this sign the Mirror of Truth because it is the materialization of the divine thoughts and hidden secrets. There is no way for a false thing to appear on the mirror of named things, for falsity is nothingness, and a thing which has the attribute of nothingness cannot materialize. When a true existence appears, there is no doubt or opposition to it, because the non-existent falsity disappears and is replaced by it. The secret is: the cause creates a necessity and man is this necessity and what the Lord indicates by the term hayula is man and in its origin he is the mirror of the Lord. The Messenger of God, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, said: "The faithful is the mirror of the faithful." Here, the two "faithfuls" indicate similarity. While God says in the Holy Qur'an:

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utemgitar
tasbih-a

There is nothing whatever like unto Him.

(Shura, 11)

The being of humanity in its clearest and purest form is the appearance of all the attributes of the Lord—
not, indeed, of His own Self, for there is nothing whatever like unto Him. The miraculous appearance of His beautiful attributes in man is described by God who says:

We have indeed created man in the best of forms.

(Tin, 4)

O you who are on this path, think how the Lord describes humanity in this verse! If you understand, this verse becomes the gate to knowledge, the source of divine wisdom gushing forth as water gushed from the rock when Moses struck it with his staff. The great man of knowledge, Abul-Hakim, may Allah be pleased with him, used the term *imam mubin*, "the clear book of evidence," to refer to the human soul. By this he means the Hidden Tablet. God refers to it:

And We have ordained laws for him (Moses),
in the (hidden) tablets, in all matters.

(A'raf, 145)

Shaikh Abul-Hakim calls the hidden tablets all and everything, as they contain all things ordained by God to be followed by the faithful. God also says:

And of all things have We taken account in a
Clear Book (of evidence).

(Ya Sin, 12)

which is the hidden tablets. The whole of the universe under and above the hidden tablets is surrounded and strengthened by man, the microcosm. That is why man is the real clear tool of guidance. And his station is close to God; he receives his guidance from Him. That is man's destiny and his joy. So be aware and realize what you have, for in that book which you are, God says:

Nothing have We omitted from the book.

(An'am, 58)

The best of God's creation, containing and realizing all possibilities, the true guide is the perfect man. No one who does not contain all of God's attributes and conditions and commands mentioned in the divine books or whose state does not fully correspond to them can be a true guide.

The guidance is in the very being of one whose state corresponds to the conditions and characteristics recorded in the Holy Qur'an, which is the only distinguisher of truth from error. If such a being is available to guide, all others who claim to be guides become invalid.

When we look at man as the guide designated by God and see how this position fell upon him, and question whether this quality is from him, himself, or given to him, we can see that it is because of secret inner qualities and possibilities in man's essence. But the position of guide is given to him as a divine trust. God says:

God commands you to render back your trusts
to whomever they are due.

(Nisa', 58)

This is the divine command! So let us look into the mirror of truth. It is said, "The faithful is the mirror of the

faithful": when the faithful looks into the "clear book of evidence," the guide, the mirror, shows the truth. Thus we see the mirror of truth brought forth by the divine command in which the faithful becomes the mirror of the faithful. Although there are two faithfals, only one is seen.

The guide of the commands of God is verbal while the mirror is visual in which he is dematerialized, refined. The mirror is the keeper of secrets and of the divine trust. It is that guide of guides, our source, our support, the one whom we trust. Abu Madyan called the soul of man the holder of the divine trust. Other saints among the Sufis, as well, gave the soul this name. They considered the material being of man as a place of darkness. As the sun brings light upon the world, they thought of the soul enlightening the realm of the human being. Yet one must understand that although the same sun shines upon them both, the daylight of Baghdad is not necessarily like the daylight of Mecca.

When we think of the divine light which the Creator, the source of all light, kindled in His essence, we think of it as a ball of light and call it the sun, for the sun brings light to all parts of the world facing it. In those places upon which the sun shines there are other lights from the infinite power of the Creator, like other suns. The light that burns within one is called the soul. As the sun in the sky shines in different parts of the world with different intensities, so do the suns within people shine differently, depending upon whether the matter enclosing them is fine or coarse.

Whether fine or coarse, the material being is a close and honored relative of the light of the soul, and at times the soul floods the cup of the body and overflows and runs in different quantities through different organs of the body.

In some parts of the being it appears in abundance, and in others less. As the enlightenment of man and beast differ, so what man contains within may not be acceptable for the angels. Water flows and floods. That is its true character. But we also attribute this to the sun from which the light flows and floods the world. In the case of the sun it is only a metaphor. This the Sufis think: the human soul relative to the total soul is like the governor of a city compared to the king of the realm. If governors are beneficent, the citizens love them and support them. If they are tyrants, the same people condemn them and punish them. God says:

The earth will shine with the glory of its Lord.

(Zumar, 69)

The Lord is the one who is the owner of the earth.

The light which shines with His glory is His sovereignty and command. God also says, addressing the soul:

Oh thou soul in complete rest and satisfaction,
come back to thy Lord, well pleased thyself
and well pleasing unto Him.

(Fajr, 27-28)

The soul which the Lord addresses and reminds in this verse is the animal soul, which connects the human with the animal. At death, when it goes back to its Lord, it is like the sun setting, taking the daylight with it, and like the shadow of the world falling on the moon, darkening it.

Death is a cloud veiling the light of the soul. Like the sun, the guide sets, leaving in his place his deputy the governor, like a moon shedding light upon the night. In its turn, the moon also sets. But the enlightenment thrown by

the governor upon the realm of human beings is not like the light of the king-guide. During the rule of the governor, the light of the guide is a hidden secret soul. When both the king and his governor are gone, what is left are the stars of the divine ordinance. Those are the wise men of canonic law, but they don't have the power to detect and eliminate the beastly attempts of the wild desires of the flesh, which will try to rule the human being.

O follower of the path of truth: if you look deep into the divine secrets, you will find that you yourself are the source of divine wisdom. The Sufis call this source the center of the circle. Someone came and asked the Sufi in which direction to go.

O Sufi, where is the wisdom hidden in the seen?
 'Tis within the circle of the unseen.
 If I can't find it, is there one like it?
 Bits of it are here, you have to connect it.
 The beginning is the Truth of which we know little.
 For it is hidden in a light which is blinding.
 It is spread within the four dimensions, each
 overwhelming the other.
 All meet at a center called the soul.
 The circle ends at the top where it is starting.
 Drop by drop it collects but there is always a first
 drop.
 The art is in it and all the power of other drops.
 You ask about the ocean; it is within the drop,
 And the life of man flows in it.
 Very fast it floats to the eternal union (Rumi)
 Of the end and the beginning is
 God's gift, the Truth.

My advice to the ones who wish to follow this path: Know that what we call God's deputy, the soul, is the center of the circle of all existence. God entrusted it with this honored state because He knew its potential to rule in justice within the realm of the individual human being.

What moved the Lord to make it His deputy was this attribute of justice: without it, it would have remained a dot upon the circumference. Instead, God took the soul from the circumference and placed it at the center of the sphere. The proof of the characteristic of justice at the center is that all the radii from the center to the points of the circumference are equal. If a circle is to be drawn, the center is an absolute necessity. Thus the center is the cause of the circle. No matter how big a circle or sphere is, its measurement depends upon the center. The Circle exists because of its Center; the center is the guide, the commander.

Without this there is neither circle nor sphere. God existed forever and nothing was with Him. Spreading His arms and legs as radii, He described the circle of existence, a symbol of unending generosity and indivisible unity. The tip of one of His hands reaches to the top of the circle, which is the sacred secret realm of angels; one of His feet reaches the bottom of the circle, which is the realm of material, visible existence. The latter is the realm where God's order of right and wrong resides; the former are the levels of the beginning of creation. God covers all and knows all and addresses His creation, saying:

I have created you from nothing, even as you were before your creation.



The hand of God does not move, but the circumference rotates. May God shed light upon your inner eye and show you the divine signs, and may the Truth shed light upon your path. If you would see and understand His signs and His attributes and character, you would find such beautiful Names! If you wished to enumerate them, they would not fit into the space within which you exist. Then you would see the honor and the grace bestowed upon you in comparison to the rest of the creation. May this suffice for the time being.

CHAPTER 2

DISCUSSIONS AMONG THE MEN OF KNOWLEDGE ON THE REALITY OF THE SOUL

Muslim scholars have differed over the nature of the soul, the deputy of God. Some have considered it to be the seed of the personality of a human being, thus attributing to it a place. In their minds this seed of individual human character has still a non-material quality quite different from the life-energy of an animal. Others have thought of it as a kind of being that cannot be realized by the senses or the emotions, yet by which the Creator linked the capacity for realization to material human existence. As long as the soul is within man, the living material being can think, understand, and realize. When the soul leaves the flesh, one's senses, and one's ability to perceive and conceive and feel, also leave.

Other scholars have thought of the soul as the deputy of God, acting and doing things in His name, but nonetheless of a fine created matter, versatile as a liquid, which is poured out and spreads and infiltrates into the minutest places in the human body, without a particular place of its own.

One of these scholars, 'Abdul-Malik ibn Habib, says: "The soul is a refined and ethereal existence, not matter but resembling it, with two eyes, two ears, two hands, and two feet, corresponding to every organ in the human body, yet hidden within it. Perhaps the whole of the visible human being is the materialization of the soul within it."

Then the question will arise, can anything prevent the soul from such materialization? The answer will be, no. The soul, the individual self, and their materialized form are united. Yet it is forbidden to them to feel each other, to hear each other. The soul feels the pain of the flesh as well as its joy, but it is eternal."

In both cases the soul is invisible. When we talk about the pain and joy that it feels, these are not physical pain and joy, but their meaning. The soul itself is the meaning of the body. How can a meaning, a concept, feel pain and joy through the concept of pain and joy? Rationally it is impossible. Something that is rationally impossible is not acceptable in Islam, just as the religious law cannot require something that is impossible.

A second question relates to the soul's eternity. If the soul needs a body, a material form to inhabit, and if there are a finite number of souls for created beings, are souls reincarnated in different forms and shapes at different times? Thus the opinions of the scholars which we have exposed are false. Those who do not accept that the soul is the seed-essence of the individual human being must accept that human essence is not of one single kind, but of many kinds. On the other hand, if we do accept the soul as a singular essence, we are obliged to think that the essence of everyone is the same. Rationally this also seems to be impossible. Those who think of the soul as the unique seed of an individual ignore the common role of Intellect. On the other hand if one accepts the soul as other than the individual essence, then one has to accept that it is not material, because the material body is formed of many centers maintaining related sets of essential characteristics.

Other sources say that the soul is a creative force

under the command of someone other than one's self. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, who is one of these, says that the soul is neither inside nor outside of the living being. It has no connection with it, yet it is with it at all times. It has no place, and its influence on every aspect and action of the living being is total. It is both separated from and united with the living being; its special character is that it puts things in order. Some question this opinion and say that even if the soul is the opposite of the flesh, it must be admitted that it is not far away from it.

If the human being becomes dependent on something other than the soul, the soul distances itself from it, returning when this dependence disappears. This means that the soul does not correct the false dependence of the being. Only the disappearance of the thing upon which the being depended solves the problem, and it solves it directly. If this dependence is upon inanimate things, when the being wholly ceases to consider them, they cease to exist for it, and disappear.

The power of the soul as an instrument of equilibrium and order is its ability to detect opposites, including the life in seemingly lifeless matter. So, are all these things illusions? The answer comes from those who claim the soul as the essence of the material being, and that the body is not an appearance resembling the soul.

One should consider the soul as the essence of the being, an ethereal body materialized in the flesh it fills, and see that it really is not an invisible essence inhabiting a visible being—because you are then assigning a place to it. It is not an existence occupying a place.

Al-Ghazali claims that the soul exists without form or place, as God does, yet it is not He.

Which one of these opinions should we accept?

Although they hold differing opinions about the soul, all these scholars believe in the oneness and unity of the Lord. When the Lord created the human soul as His deputy, He made it His mirror within which He saw all that He had created, and all His own Names and attributes. Humanity is the proof of God's existence and a guide to lead the creation to Him. He sent man into the universe as His deputy in order to make the created know the Creator. He gave him His trust and the light to enlighten others. He gave him all that and more, not to support tyranny but so that mankind might rule in justice, and made him responsible for all that might happen in the whole of creation. If we accept this, all that we have said is in concordance with the religious canons and scriptures. All existence is His, and so is all that happens, for He is the Creator. May God make you successful in your search. He is the one who guides one to truth, for He is the Truth.

CHAPTER 3

THE STRUCTURE OF THE CITY OF MAN WHOSE KING IS THE SOUL, THE DEPUTY OF GOD

When the Lord created His deputy, He also built a city for him where he could reside with his retinue and governing officials. He named the city Human Being. When the Lord finished the building of the city, He assigned a special place at its center for His deputy. All the speculations about it—whether the deputy really resides there or just uses it as headquarters, whether it is a throne room or a courtroom or a ministry, or merely a place where his voice is heard—are beside the point. The Lord called that place the heart.

The Lord built this city on a foundation of four walls made of earth, water, air, and fire. Some say that the place of the Lord's deputy is not the heart but the mind. I insist that it is the heart, although no one has evidence or proof. But for establishing stability and for heedfulness and remembrance, the heart is surely the center. Our Master related that his Lord said: "I do not fit into the heavens and the worlds which I created, but I fit into the heart of My faithful servant." Our Master, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, also said: "The Lord looks neither at you nor at your deeds, but at your heart." The Lord always remembers and is heedful, and looks upon His deputy at all times.

The Lord made the soul responsible for the body.

It is not their eyes which are blind, but their hearts which are in their breasts.

(Hajj, 46)

Men wander upon the face of this world, and within the space of their lives they see what is being born and dying, what is being built and destroyed. They have eyes to see and ears to hear, and should take lessons. If they are not heedful it is because their hearts are blind. It is not the vegetal heart that is responsible here, nor what is vulgarly called mankind—a four-legged animal standing on its hind legs. God has not given His secret to the animal, but to His deputy the soul. Yet the vegetal heart is the palace of that deputy, the king.

Our Master, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, said: "There is a small piece of meat in the body of man: If it is clean and righteous, the whole being is clean. If that piece of meat is rotten, the whole being is rotten. That piece of meat is the heart." It is the palace of the deputy of God where the secrets are kept, and it must be proper and in order. It is the safe where the secret documents and rules and orders of the deputy are kept.

If the leader is right, the followers are right. If the leader has gone astray, his companions and followers will go astray.

When the Lord made the human soul master of the human city, He taught him the character, the behavior, the thoughts of the inhabitants of that city. Since he understood his people, his people recognized him and became his dependents and helpers. If God's deputy, whom He sent to govern, is disloyal and corrupt and betrays His trust, his people will be corrupt and disloyal to him as

well. On the other hand, if he fears and respects the One who entrusted him with power, his companions will trust and respect him also.

So look at yourselves: If you are God-fearing, just, and righteous, so is your soul. You are the way you are because of it. First the ruler and the guide must be right; then the signs of righteousness appear in his dependents.

One sees so many things in oneself, without knowing why they are, whether they were there in the beginning or happened afterwards or will be the same tomorrow—for one does not know the procedures of the secret divine government within, or how to protect that little piece of meat, the heart, whose disorder can destroy us all. The Lord created a tower on the higher levels of the city of man. He built it with refined materials and set it to overlook the whole city, and called it Mind. He opened four large windows on the top of it, for the enjoyment of the four corners of the city, and called them Eyes, Ears, Mouth, and Nose.

In the center of the tower He built a vault to protect the treasure of inspiration, and in it He stacked the treasure, all arranged in perfect order. The directors of the senses could consult this Hall of Information, and add new data to it in turn. The dreams dreamt come from this vault. Here too is the wealth gathered by the collector of taxes within the city of man, the monies stacked separately as lawful and unlawful. The Lord built another vault within the tower of the mind which He called the Vault of Intellect. The goods in that vault are brought from the Vault of Inspiration. Here they are weighed and compared; what is right is kept in the second vault, and what is wrong is returned to the first.

In a corner of the mind He built yet another vault,

where memories are kept. The keeper of memories is a high official called Intelligence.

There is another precinct in the city of man where the daughter of the deputy of God, Personality, lives. This place is known as Selfhood. Here there are contradictions, here both God's ordinances and what He has forbidden are kept. On special honored nights the commands of the All-Powerful are distributed here. The place is protected by God Himself, for it is under the Footstool where His holy Feet are set—just as the soul, the deputy of God, is under and protected by His Throne. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali says: "The human being is that child whose father is the soul and whose mother is the self." He holds that the Lord of the soul keeps it on a high level under His Throne and our mother, the self, on a lower level under His Feet. As He is the Lord of the parents, so is He the Lord of our material existence, their child. The Sufis know that all states and actions of the self, whether right or wrong, are predestined by the Lord. The only part of man which is not bound by predestination is the soul, which they follow into the future. With precaution and insistence, they hope to rouse the deputy of God.

Even if the soul realizes the danger of the temptations of the commanding self, the human being is left in a difficult position. He is undecided between two powerful entities: the soul calls him unto him, then the evil commanding self calls him unto him. But all this test is by the permission of God, for He says:

All things are from God.
(Nisa', 78)

He also says:

Of the bounties of thy Lord, We bestow freely
on these as well as on those.

(Bani Isra'il, 20)

And He says to the soul

And the portion and order given to it and for its
enlightenment as to its wrong and its right.

(Shams, 7-8)

Selfhood is a place of order and enlightenment, but it is also inclined toward the Evil Commanding Self. If it is tempted, then it loses its purity. All things are from God—it is He who made the Commanding Self desirous of evil, and it is He who made human selfhood bent from time to time to evil as well as to good. When the self is rational and heedful, it is pure and in order. Then it is called the Self-Assured Self. That is its lawful state. Although God had created His deputy with the most perfect attributes, He saw that, on his own, he was nonetheless weak, powerless, and in need. God wanted His deputy to realize that he would only find strength in the help and support of his Lord. He created a strong opposition for him to provoke this realization. That is the secret of the two opposing possibilities for human selfhood.

The soul and the self are man and wife. When the man calls upon his wife and she does not respond, people say, "What is the matter that your wife does not come to you?"

The man asks his trusted companion, Intelligence,

the reason for this unresponsiveness. Intellect tells his master, the soul, "O my gracious master, you are calling upon a being who has a station as high as your own. She is a master in her own right, with power, and under the orders of the All-Powerful. She is called Desire for the Worldly, the Commanding Self. It is not so easy to command her!" Then the soul sends his wife a letter by his adviser's hand, explaining his feelings about her. But the self takes the messenger of the soul prisoner. Intelligence submits to the self, under duress.

When Intelligence, now under the influence of the self, is permitted to return to his master the soul, he reports that not only has he lost his wife, but most of his administration and armies have gone over to her as well. Only a very few have remained loyal to him. The mind tells the soul that his enemy has already infiltrated the courtyard of his palace, and is ready to destroy his reign and capture his kingdom and sit upon his throne. He claims that it is his sacred duty to warn him before they are both destroyed. Now, with the warning of the mind, the soul realizes that he is reduced to total helplessness. He is powerless, unable to act. All he can do is to throw himself upon the mercy of the Lord of all and everything. Turning to Him, he begs for help. He knows now that he cannot save himself. Only at his defeat does he know the value of his Lord, the All-Powerful. That indeed was the purpose of all that had happened. If a man lived all his life in complete comfort and safety and had all that he wished for, nothing he had would retain any value for him. It is only pain and trouble that make one realize the value of peace and safety.

When God's deputy, the soul, turns to his Lord for

help, the Lord becomes a mediator between the soul and the self. And so the self abstains from taking total control of the realm of the human being.

The Lord addresses her "O Self-Assured Self, return to Me, pleased with Me; I am pleased with you. Enter My Paradise among My servants whom I love." Responding to this call both the self and the soul bow their heads in submission, satisfied by the divine approval. Now that all differences have disappeared, they come together again at last. The Self-Assured Self, whom the Lord addressed, is this joined existence of the soul and the self, harmonious and at peace, pleased by their Lord and their Lord pleased by them.

The Lord named it the Self-Assured Self because at this point the self has realized its true potential. When she was tempted by evil, it was against her nature, for the Lord Himself said, "all things are from God," and He also said "all His blessings are bestowed freely upon all, on these as well as on those." When He invites the soul and the self to Himself "well pleased themselves and well pleasing unto Him," it is implied that the two are pleased with each other and in harmony. When He invites them to His Paradise, He is inviting them to come to the safety of a secure place away from places unpleasing to the Lord. When they are asked to come into this Paradise together with His servants whom He loves, He includes them among those who have submitted to Him and have connected their hearts to Him in obedience.

The lust of pleasures of this world is the paradise of the unfaithful. It is the true Fire whose exterior resembles the Garden—but beneath the surface is torture. Our Master (peace and blessings of God upon him) warned his

Companions, saying, "Paradise is beyond gates that appear displeasing and undesirable while the gates of Hell are, attractive and delicious. They will only reveal what is behind them at the end of the world, when Antichrist comes." He also described Hell thus: "There are two valleys there. In one there is a river of fire and in the other a river of water. Whoever in repentance, accepting his punishment, seeks the valley of fire, will find himself in the cool valley of water. Whoever, unrepentant, seeks the valley of water to save himself from punishment, will fall upon the fire."

The self responds to the one who uses his intelligence. To a certain extent they agree. A grave question: Why is the soul that God has created as His deputy subverted by the Evil-Commanding Self? There are two answers. One has already been explained. God wished to test the soul to make clear to it its total need of its Creator, provoking failure by making it respond to the temptations of the Evil-Commanding Self while deaf to the voice of Intellect. The second opinion is that the soul calls and invites the self to it. When the self responds, it responds in a language the soul does not understand. It is the excitement and ambition of learning something unknown that gets the soul in trouble, just as it was Eve's curiosity about the forbidden fruit that made her believe the devil. Thus, mischief, sedition and war continue within the realm of the human being, caused by the misunderstanding and disagreement between the soul and the Evil-Commanding Self. At times one conquers the other; at times the situation is reversed. Sometimes one reigns in deserts and the other in fertile gardens. This battle will continue until the Day of Judgment.

The faithful who believe in God but who at times fail and are disobedient lose the deserts of their realm in the battle with the Evil-Commanding Self. While it reigns in those deserts, the king of the mind captures its capital. Hypocrites lose their capital city to the Evil-Commanding Self and hold on to the deserts of their being. Nonbelievers are slaves of the Evil-Commanding Self, having lost all the kingdom of the human being.

On the Day of Judgment two groups will form. One will be bound for Paradise, the other bound for hellfire, where they will stay forever. When all are gathered together so that everyone can see, Death will be slain. Then all will live in their assigned places for eternity. Believers who have failed to obey God at all times, after being punished by the fear of Fire will be sent to join those who are bound for Paradise. Hypocrites will be sent to join the unfaithful bound to suffer in Hell.

Division is incidental. Unity is principal. If a hand does something against the principle of the whole being, the whole being responds to prevent it from its error. The sick branch either dries and falls, saving the tree, or the sap of the tree cures it. Such is the state of the faithful who are at times guilty of errors. However if the whole body is sick, a healthy hand cannot cure it. If the whole tree is dead, the few last green leaves will not save it. Such is the case of the hypocrites.

In the kingdom of man, under the rule of the soul, the deputy of God, there are four kinds of citizens. There are pure faithful ones who obey the prescriptions of their Lord and have been able to protect themselves from all evil. Then there are those who are basically faithful, but at times are apt to revolt. There are hypocrites who try to

appear faithful while they are not, and there are the unfaithful who take themselves to be God. That is how it is in the kingdom of man, amid the continuous mischief, sedition, and war between the soul, the mind, and the Evil-Commanding Self. This we shall try to relate, investigate and consider.

God the Truth tells the truth, and guides one to the straight path.

CHAPTER 4

THE CAUSES OF CONFLICT BETWEEN INTELLECT AND EGO, THE EVIL-COMMANDING SELF

Reader, may God lead you to recognize that falsehood becomes evident only when the mind and the ego start fighting, for when they attack each other the whole human realm is caught in the crossfire. So every member is rudely awakened and becomes aware of the conflict—that one or the other is striving to get hold, by force, of the whole of the human kingdom.

It is impossible, according to Divine Law and according to Intellect, for a kingdom to be ruled by two rulers. In fact, violent conflict will be the result of the rule of anyone but God. Thus it is necessary that the whole creation join in understanding and equality under Divine Law. Yet no government is ready to rule by it.

The reason for the revelation of the Divine Law is to eliminate disorder and to establish harmony. No one is ready to accept that Divine Law is immutable and applies to everything at all times, and that its purpose is to create a single and unique order. Yet it is known that the Lord wanted to delegate the government of the human ~~kingdom to one single entity~~. The example of it has been given in the person of our Master, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, who also declared: "If, in a single nation, men swear allegiance to two rulers, eliminate one of them."

When ruling is deputized to someone, as is the case

with everything else, it has an outer and an inner meaning. What has been discussed up until now is the outer aspect of ruling. The inner spiritual, government infiltrating into the human realm—as if through narrow veins and thin nerves, invisibly and secretly—is quite different from the evident, visible outer order. When we understand the secrets of the inner government, we may think that this explanation is conjecture. On the contrary, find some comfort in it.

If you follow the tradition of our Master—who ordered that one contender be killed if there are two who attempt to rule one country—in the country of your being, you are liable, by error, to try to eliminate your Intellect. Thus you may leave the kingdom in the hands of the evil-commanding self. In your present condition you are not equipped to know which is which. In the battle between Intellect and the evil-commanding ego, one may have advanced and the other retreated.

Everything depends on the conditions in which you find yourself. They are like the conditions which decide who is going to lead a congregational prayer: whoever best fulfills these conditions becomes the imam. Thus one of the two contenders who have claims to rule must have the ability to adapt successfully to the existing conditions. The one who is unable to do so must be eliminated by the order of God.

The conditions which an imam must fulfill are ten. Six of these are matters of constitution. They are either existent in one naturally by birth, or else not. Four of the conditions may be acquired from outside. The six natural conditions are:

1. To be an adult, physically and spiritually mature.
2. To be rational, a possessor of Intellect.
3. To be free, not a slave of influences.
- ~~4. To be a man.~~
- ~~5. To be related to the tribe of Quraysh.~~
6. To be sound in the five senses.

The four acquired conditions are:

1. To have a strong feeling for helping and serving other people.
- ~~2. To be competent in social and legal matters.~~
3. To be knowledgeable.
4. To fear God and be determined not to sin.

It is essential that the force which is going to lead you spiritually must meet these conditions. Certainly your soul meets these conditions, and the evil-commanding self does not. Indeed, the soul is not God, but certainly it is from God.

When these conditions are briefly analyzed, perhaps we will be convinced that they are the characteristics of the soul and the antithesis of the evil-commanding ego.

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The first condition, of being an adult, is to be dependent directly upon one's Lord and to have a connection with Him. This can only be done through the soul—for when God created the soul He asked it, "Am I not your Lord?" and the soul responded, "Indeed." It is this promise of God, and this allegiance of the soul, which connects them. The meaning of adulthood is the maturity of the soul which becomes worthy of the address of its Lord and the responsibility of being able to answer positively.

Rationality, which is the second condition of being an imam, is an attribute which God has given to the soul, attaching it to the soul as its helper and minister in ruling the human being. Intellect is the character of the soul which is in continuous contemplation of its Lord and connected with Him, for it is Intellect which enables the soul to respond when it is asked if God is its Lord. If the soul did not contain intelligence, no offer, proposal, or choice could have been made in response to the address of its Lord, for lack of intelligence is lack of responsibility.

One of the duties of an imam as spiritual leader is to be in the service of his community. A slave, under the command and obligation to serve only his master, cannot serve others of his own free will. Indeed, although the soul is the master of the human being, it is still under the command of God, and it serves others as His deputy. The soul, as the first creation of Allah, is independent of all and everything except its Creator. It may therefore be totally concerned with the matters of the being which it occupies. Thus it is the symbol of freedom within the whole creation, and:

Celebrates God's praises night and day, nor
does it ever flag nor intermit.
(*Anbiya'*, 10)

Therefore, freedom is the third condition for an imam.

The fourth condition of a spiritual leader is that he must be a man. "A woman" represents someone who is a slave to his desires and unable to consider anything or anyone except himself, someone who is imperfect and in need of protection from even himself, someone who is best prevented from exercising authority and influence over others, who is not acceptable as a witness in a conflict. In the realm of the human being this signifies a place of disharmony and fear. The lack of perfection and the need of protection situate this "woman" as the daughter of the imam, the spiritual guide. Disharmony, disorder, and fear are the causes of the conflict between the soul and the evil-commanding self who claims to be master over the human realm.

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The fifth condition, to be related to the tribe of Quraysh (to which our Master, Muhammad, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, belonged), means that an imam must have signs of the characteristics of the Seal of the Prophets.

Within our Master, not only the last, but also the first divine revelations were manifested. When he was asked, "When did you become a prophet?", he responded, "I was a prophet when Adam was between earth and water." But the first period of prophethood, beginning with Adam (may God's peace and blessings be upon him), finished with the prophethood of Jesus (may God's peace and blessings be upon him), as Allah says in His holy book:

The similitude of Jesus before Allah is as that
of Adam.

(*Ali-Imran*, 59)

According to divine judgment, the birth of Jesus and his attributes are similar to those of Adam, whom God

created of earth and water and to whom He said "Be," and he became. As God starts a thing, so He ends a thing. The period of the prophethood of Adam ended with Jesus.

The words revealed to Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) setting order everywhere, from the East to the West, constitute both the second and the last period of prophethood. And as Muhammad was sent not as the prophet of a particular nation but as a mercy upon the whole universe, so is the soul meant to regulate not just a part of our human nature, but the whole of it.

The sixth condition for an imam is to be sound in sight and hearing, for the blind and the deaf are unable to help themselves. The blind cannot lead the blind—but the eye that matters is not the eye that sees only the world. It is the eye that seeks to see reality. The ear that matters is not the ear that hears only the sounds of the world. It is the ear that hears the truth. Our pure Master, may God praise his soul, told us that his Lord told him, "My loving servants come close to Me with extra worship and efforts, and I love them. And when I love them, I become their ears with which they hear and their eyes with which they see"

The seventh and eighth conditions which an imam must fulfill are competence and rank, and ability to serve and save others. The realm of the human being, which is a land where a war is waged, needs the intervention of the soul to give victory to the rightful owner of the land. God says:

I will assist you with a thousand angels.

(*Anfal*, 9)

The "thousand angels" is the soul.

The ninth condition is knowledge. The symbol of divine knowledge is the first man created and the first prophet, Adam (God's peace and blessings be upon him).

Allah entrusted to him the names of all and everything and made him a teacher even to His angels.

The tenth condition is to be honorable and to be determined not to sin. This is the source, the center where the spiritual guide is generated. The Divine Law is his robe, the truth is his crown.

Whoever fulfills these conditions is the deputy of God, and may serve in His name.

The conflict between Intellect and the evil-commanding self is caused by their very nature, which induces each of them to try to dominate the whole of the human being and to be the ruler of it. Even when one of them is able to conquer the whole realm, the other still strives to regain what it has lost and to repair what has been destroyed.

What can save the human realm from danger is its obedience to a beneficent influence which comes from outside. That influence from outside of man is the divine law. It is only when man is open and ready to accept the divine law that the soul in him recognizes that its influence has the same nature, the same characteristics, as itself. Only then may it distance itself from the evil-commanding ego. When this happens, Intellect imagines that it has found an ally against the ego, and rises against it—and the war between the two starts.

The two forces fighting to dominate the human being become aware of their differences only in their relation to the divine law. Yet viewed from the outside, it is evident that one of these forces is aimed at bringing the human being to destruction, and the other, to salvation. Both of them fear that the divine wisdom ordains the elimination of their conflict and the destruction of the ones who cause it. If they would stop their hostility towards each other, perhaps both Intellect and the ego could find an

argument, a proof to justify their existence—but the Lord has willed it thus. As He says in His holy book:

He cannot be questioned for His acts, but they will be questioned for theirs.

(*Anbiya'*, 23)

Thus the Lord sends whomever He wills to Hell and whomever He wills to His Paradise. The evil-commanding ego and the lusts and desires of the flesh which it commands are the truth of the Fire itself and are bound to it, while the soul is a part of the divine light and is bound to that. Each one feeds itself from its own existence. They only see their own attributes. If the ego knew that burning in hellfire would be its punishment, it would escape from its own fire towards the divine light reflected from the soul—but its intellect does not reach further than itself. Nor is the soul capable of understanding Hell. That is why both the soul and the ego try to pull Intellect to their side.

As a pure wind blows fire into flames, the fire of the ego suffers from the pure divine light. And as the ego feels pain from light, it thinks that the human realm which it governs will also be pained by the divine light generated from the soul. Therefore it tries to protect its realm from pain by covering it with many veils of unconsciousness, imagination, and desires. The soul which generates divine light tries to do the same, to protect the human being from the pain of fire. The two adversaries vie to convince the human realm of their own convictions and impress upon it their beliefs, hoping that it will join them and assume either the attributes of fire or the attributes of light. Thus the realm would adhere to either one or the other, and be subject to it.

This is the sedition, the trouble between the two, the cause of all these inner wars. If only one of them, instead of just looking at itself, would heed the voice always coming from the outside! It would then indeed see who is truly the cause of all this, who is really making each of them do what it does. Then it would have found the truth. Then truth and justice would be established. Then neither the soul nor the ego would be able to say about the other that there is danger in "this" or salvation in "that."

If they were even able to view each other, there would have been a chance of peace within the realm of the human being. Do you think that the opposition to inner peace is only from the evil-commanding ego? If it would just disappear, all that is being discussed here would not have existed. Indeed it is the source of all conflict. If it would have disappeared, all would disappear.

This is a secret which the Lord opens to some and hides from others. The Creator does not have to explain His actions, while the created being is created responsible for its actions. The proof is in the Lord's words:

If the Lord had so willed, He could have made mankind one people, but they will not cease to dispute except those on whom thy Lord hath bestowed His mercy.

(*Hud*, 18-19)

"Those on whom the Lord has bestowed His mercy" are those whom the Lord has created with characters containing His own beautiful names and attributes, so that the creation will know them.

Allah tells the truth and leads one to the straight path.

CHAPTER 5

ON THE NAME, THE ATTRIBUTES, AND THE STATION OF THE IMAM WHO IS NONE OTHER THAN THE LAW WHERE GOD'S DECREES ARE PRESERVED

There is no doubt that one of the four pillars of Islam is the principle of the *imam*, the source where the Lord's decrees are preserved and from which they generate. According to the divine harmony and order which rules this universe, God's deputy must be known by a unique name, and none other than he could be called by that name. When he distinguishes himself with that name, only the imam identifies Him and understands Him. None, not even His representatives and deputies, can change His name.

In the name of His essence, God is unique. When one says *Allah*, only the cause of everything existing and all that which will exist is meant. When the verse "worship Allah" was revealed to His Messenger, no one asked him who or what was Allah, but when the verse "Prostrate to the Merciful" was revealed, the companions of the Prophet asked him who "the Merciful" was. He then had to explain.

When we look for other names which may identify Him as unique, we cannot find any but the attributes which He gave Himself, such as in the verse in which He says to His angels: "Your Lord will create a deputy to rule the world." His saying that He will send one deputy to rule

the world is a proof that two rulers cannot exist. That is why our Master, the Prophet of God (peace and blessings be upon him), said, "If there are two ruling one realm, eliminate one of them." Even if two rulers are in agreement and unified, the continuance of this agreement and unity is impossible. For the Lord said:

If there were gods other than Allah which would mean two rulers governing one realm sooner or later they would disagree.

When that happens, the order which one gives will be forbidden by the other, and it is impossible to apply two orders which contradict each other. But those who are governed know that if they do not act upon their orders, they will be punished. So one will follow one order, and another will follow the other. In so doing they will oppose each other and war will start, causing the destruction of the country of the human being. That is why the imam whose duty is to put things in order accepts the rule of one ruler alone.

There is another verse where Allah says:

It is He who hath made you agents, inheritors of the earth.

(*An'am*, 165)

How is it that the divine law accepts only a single ruler, while God in this verse addresses a plurality as the inheritors of the earth? The secret of this verse is that there will be many deputies inheriting one from the other, but there will be only one at any one time. If another claims to be a ruler while there is already one, he is to be rejected, for he becomes the *Dajjal* of the time, the ultimate liar.

When one ruler leaves, another inherits. That is why the Lord uses the plural in the verse we have quoted. The new ruler must assume the station, the name, the attributes, the character, and the morals of the one whom he is replacing. It is only then that his helpers and his government will rule in his name and in accordance with his attributes. These attributes must correspond to the divine attributes.

If the kingdom of your being is to be ruled well, then protect your religion; be in its service. Don't oppose it. If you do, you will be opposed. Keep in sight the divine commands, whether you know them all or not. His commands are the gift of your Lord to humankind.

Be heedful at all times, for if the whole is aware, its parts are aware. Control your anger, do not seek revenge. Respect the old and love the young. Appreciate the one who spends his own for the well-being of others. Do not look upon the errors of others. Beware of falling into dishonor, for if you fall low, the One who can help you will be out of sight. Don't talk unless your talk means something. Repent for the wrong you have done in the past, for the wrong not regretted is the cause of wrath.

No age is better than another: to be old, famous, or honored are not spiritual levels in themselves. Every age and station has its value, and the young, the humble, may be more worthy of respect. What is important are deeds. To appreciate the good deeds of others may lead one to do the same.

You are charged to rule the kingdom of your being. When you are to pass an edict for something to be done, consider its end. If the end is good, then sign it. If not, do not put it into action.

Show great care in all that you do, especially when you act in obedience to your Lord. There will be a great

chance of failure and error, for your ego will continually be commanding you to do evil. So, while you obey your Lord, oppose your evil-commanding self. If you follow it, you may be a lesson to others.

All the members of your being are the followers of the king that you are. They are not aware of the importance and the value of the deputy that God has bestowed upon them. Do not show yourself in their company often, but rarely as a flash, or a passing shadow. For if you show yourself often, they will think of you as one of themselves, and lack in obedience. As God says:

If He were to enlarge the provision for His servants, they would indeed transgress beyond all bounds through the earth, but He sends it down in due measure as He pleases.

(Shura, 27)

The "enlarging of the provision" is the evidence of His presence. If you are present too often, the ones who see you will be spoiled. They will feel familiarity and forget about your uniqueness and the oneness of your position, while they should be anxious, seeking a cause or an occasion for your presence.

If God manifested Himself continuously, it would have weakened the urgency to follow religious requirements. Availability of divine manifestation at all times would certainly not advance but rather cause the decline of the human kingdom, and precipitate its destruction.

If we are heedful in our daily life, we realize that we rarely see the divine manifestation, and then only like lightning in the night sky. This is the divine policy.

Therefore, O master of the human kingdom, lend your ear to this brother of yours in whose heart there is love and compassion for you, and who is indebted to you. When you wish to descend from your proper place of divine wisdom and power down to the realm of matter in the physical body and show yourself, present Reason, a minister in your government, instead of yourself. Let him be your representative with your subjects. Then you will keep your authority. Let him bring your beneficent edicts to them. Let him praise you—then your glory and your power will grow in the public view. Thus your magnanimity, your strength, will be accepted by your subjects, without any doubt or resentment in their hearts. On the contrary, their love for you will increase as your minister tells them of your compassion, care, and generosity towards them. Your people will need you not only in times of trouble and hopelessness, but also in equanimity.

There will be times when they will find cause to revolt against your authority. But they will think twice, for the fear of your power and the respect for your position which your minister, Reason, has inspired in them, will prevent them from attacking you. Then is the time to gather all your people in one place to show yourself to them. Among the beautiful flowers of perfect character, they will view your gentleness and your kindness towards them. They will view you in awe, and they will be inspired both with fear and hope. That will bring health to their sick hearts. They will feel secure in their fear of God. As the poet said:

As the big and beautiful bird soars far above
their heads,

It appears to them as if it is one among them.

40d
They view it with awe, but not with fear,
Yet, as it flies farther, it reminds them of God.

To be that awesome bird is only possible to someone who generates from the angelic realm where the angels closest to the Lord reside. Otherwise, one is a tyrannical ruler sitting on a high throne, watching those who have revolted being punished.

Allah says:

They all revere their Lord high above them.
(Nahl, 50)

O master of your human realm, if you must punish the one who revolts against you, do not punish him above his guilt. Only this will bring him back to his proper level.

Have you not heard that the saint Abu Yazid al-Bistami did not quench the thirst of his body for a whole year? That was his punishment to his flesh, because his ego had refused to abide by the divine order.

O master of your flesh, keep your ego cleansed of the love of this world, and free it from dependence on the world. Thus your flesh will practice being useful and serving your kingdom, rather than opposing it. Remember, the Lord assigned you to be His deputy and raised you to a divine station in this world, and taught you your function. These two, you and this world, are interdependent. While He values you above others, He has shown His hatred for the world, not having looked at its face but once since its creation.

The Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "This world is like a stinking, dried up corpse, its bowels rotted, lying on a garbage heap."

He also said, "This world is cursed by God. So are the ones upon it who have forgotten God."

How could this world become beautified by its co-existence with you whom Allah has created as His unique creation, from the essence of His own divine light? To look at this world but once with the corner of your eye suffices for you to attract the horrible hostility of its fiery mood.

Help comes from the Lord who addresses the world saying, "O world, I order you, be a lowly servant to the ones who serve Me, and be a tyrannical master to the ones who serve you."

The Lord makes the world your humble servant and it freely provides your sustenance, as well as the sustenance of the people of your kingdom who obey and serve you. Therefore beautify what you need and you wish from this world, and teach the ones who come after you to do so, so that the world, as your servant, may become beautiful. Yet do not be fooled by it. The way not to be fooled is to limit your needs to what the Lord has rendered lawful. If you resist what is unlawful in the world, if you keep your distance from it and are not fooled by its temptations, you will save yourself from being its servant, and it will become your servant. Then what you expect to receive from it comes to you freely, without your having to reap it. *ikhsan?*

Kahb al-Ahbar reports that the Lord addressed us in the Torah saying, "O sons of Adam, if you accept what comes to you through your lot, both your flesh and your heart will find comfort and I will be pleased with you. If you are not satisfied with what I have ordained for you, I will make the world your tyrannical master. Then you will be running away from it, like a terrified man running away

from a lion in the desert. I vow on My might that you will not receive a morsel more than what is due to you."

So join your body to your heart in comfort while using your will in what you want. Yet that will should not be used unrestrainedly, but under the command of what is right and what is wrong. Your will is your only resource for obtaining your needs. If you use it heedlessly, it will be exhausted. You will not have any power left when you need it to rule the kingdom of your being. You will lose your authority.

Know that there is a Lord above you. Your Lord is God. Use your will to tie yourself to Him. Spend it only for His sake upon the ones who love you and whom you love.

When you direct your will toward the acquisition of knowledge, know that all you may hope to receive is the exterior, practical orders of Allah. The meaning of your will is hidden in your will. Instead of using your will only to know and deal with things, you would better have used it to seek its own meaning, why it was given to you. Then it would not have fallen to the lowly state it inhabits now.

An example: Whether a person is a wise man or a fool, if he needs his sustenance and asks for it, he will receive it. Yet he should know that the wheat does not come from the earth, but from God, who gives it in a certain measure to be distributed to all in accordance with their need. Thus neither should one think that one's sustenance comes from this world, nor should one ask it from the world.

When someone turns his face toward the sun, his shadow falls behind him. If he walks toward the sun, his shadow will follow him but will never reach him. However he wills, whatever he does, he will find his wish only behind his heels. Only when the sun is above his head, in

the center of the heavenly dome, will his wish be under his feet. God says:

Seest thou not how their Lord extends the shade? And if He pleased, He would have made it stand still. Then We have made the sun an indication of it, then We drew it in towards Ourselves, a contraction by easy stages.

(Furqan, 46)

If there were no sun, there would be no shadow.

If, instead of turning his face to the sun, he takes the sun on his back and walks towards his shadow, he will not be able to catch up with it either, and he has lost what was due to him when his shadow was under his two feet and the sun at its apex. God will say to him:

Turn back and seek a light.

(Hadid, 13)

He can only reach his shadow when it is between his two feet. That is his lot.

O traveler of this path, you are that person, the sun is a metaphor of your Lord. Your shadow is this earth upon which you live. When the sun is above your head and you are aligned with it, your shadow under your feet is all you could wish from this world, right here and now.

O master of the human realm, has not your Lord created the world for you and you for Himself? Isn't He the one who has given this world and all that is in it into your control?

The Lord says in the Torah, "O sons of Adam, I have created everything for you and you for Myself. For My sake

and yours, take care of My creation. Do not mistreat it, for then you will be tearing apart what ties us together.”

And Allah says in His Qur'an:

I have only created Jinn and men so that they serve Me.

(Zariyat, 56)

And He says:

It is out of His mercy that He has made for you night and day, that ye may rest therein and that ye may seek of His grace.

(Qasas, 73)

And He says:

It is God who made cattle for you, that ye may use some for riding and some for food.

(Mu'min, 79)

And He has created horses, mules, and donkeys for you to ride.

(Nahl, 8)

And there is much more for you to have and to use and care for which He has created, which He mentions in His Holy Book.

But you, who are the master of them all, you have to care for those left to you in trust. You must love and yearn for the things among them that you wish to have. You must consider, as you consider yourself, the ones under you.

You must know their ranks and their states and their needs, in accordance with which you must bestow upon them what they need. But you must also prevent them from the sin of passing their boundaries.

You must teach them to obey the One who created them as well as their sustenance, and to abide within the limits which are traced for them. You must instill in them both the love and the fear of their Lord. You must teach them to teach those who will come after them. And you must teach them what will come upon them the day after today:

On the day when their tongues, their hands and their feet will bear witness against them as to their actions.

(Nur, 24)

and:

And follow not that of which thou hast no knowledge. Surely, what you heard and saw and the heart, from of all these it will be inquired [on the day of reckoning].

(Bani Isra'il, 36)

These things that God has said should guide you. Don't walk this earth with your chin up in arrogance. Guide yourself and others towards what is right. Forbid the wrong. Yet, do not ever forget the evil-commanding ego which you carry within yourself.

Do not ignore its presence. Instruct your most valuable minister, Reason, to treat it well, to be in continuous

contact with it, because it knows best how to govern the barren deserts of your realm. It has power, and it lies in its hands to do good, if it so wills, or to cause disasters, if it so wills.

If it is treated well, there will be peace in the land. Your enemies will be subdued, your treasures will be secure. Let all your will and efforts be to make order in that which is nearest to you. And that which is closest to you is the result of your efforts and of your work.

If you order that which is good in you to attack that which is bad, in hopes that the bad may turn into good, you may frighten also what is neutral in you. Then you will create hatred against you among them. Even at times when your heart is constricted and hardened, show mercy and tolerance and forgiveness, and ask God's forgiveness upon them. And ask counsel from them in the things you do, because to be loved is only possible by loving. Praise be to the ones who can do it.

O generous lord of the realm of his being, most important in ruling your realm is to give the right work to the right authority, to the one who is best suited to it. And if you wish to show one of your successes, show it at the right time, not before it is achieved and not after it is done and finished with, but just as it is completed. That is the time when its display is most needed. Then your subjects will look forward to your next achievement, and they will forget about other demands while they are waiting for your next accomplishment.

Don't you see? If, instead of the four regular seasons, God sent torrents of rain at unnatural times, and in the place of warmth and sunshine, darkness and frost, then men in their hopelessness would fall into thanklessness.

Even though God still poured His blessings upon them, men would still be apt to lose faith and revolt. And what would happen if He sent upon them total darkness and disaster at all times? Then man would lose all hope of any good or justice coming from Him.

Accept those who have faith in divine commandments and God's Messenger as an example. Then seek divine justice in these. When you have found it, and when you also find it in yourself, you will have achieved salvation in this world and in the hereafter.

When you intend to do something, say *inshallah*—"so please God." As the Lord says:

Nor say of anything, "I shall be sure to do so and so tomorrow," without adding "So please God."

(*Kahf*, 23)

and:

Break not your oaths after ye have confirmed them.

(*Nahl*, 91)

and:

Take not your oaths to practice deception between yourselves.

(*Nahl*, 94)

So beware also of bad friends. They do not only eat your fortune and bring you to bankruptcy, but devour your flesh and drink your blood and bring you to the verge of hellfire. Befriend those who have more faith than you do,

and those who know and abide with the divine law. In your communications with your friends, if you find a distortion, even a lack of knowledge of religious precepts, beware of them, they are potential enemies. Watch them and protect your possessions from them. They may be a cause for the collapse of your kingdom and for the destruction of the country of your being. That dangerous friend is not far away from you, but within the borders of your own being. His name is the desires of your flesh, the evil-commanding ego.

Our Master warns us, "Wage war against your greatest enemy, which is your own ego."

And the Lord says:

O you who believe, fight those of the disbelievers who are nearest to you.

(Taubah, 123)

That faithless one is your ego. Be aware of it. Work against it, for if you do not work against it, it will work against you. The tyrants of this world may destroy your possessions and even you; you will be a martyr and win eternal bliss. But the tyrant in you will not only do the same, but will also burn your faith into ashes and push you into hellfire.

When you give audience to your ministers and your governors, they should not present themselves to you in uniforms which you have gathered from what is customary in the regions around and about you, because these uniforms of the customs outside of you come from nowhere but from your deadly enemy, the ego. They should appear in front of you in the obligatory robes of sincerity, generosity, justice, and nobility.

The uniforms fashioned by your ego outwardly may appear ostentatious, even beautiful, but their lining is ugly and treacherous. If you can see through the surface, you will see the truth. When you are able to see what such appearances hide, you will know the antecedents as well as the consequences of what is presented to you.

Then you will have to wash the surfaces of things, first bathing them in the rivers of wisdom, then weighing them in the balance of knowledge. Try to find out if there is any good in them at all. If so, you will find satisfaction. If not, you must accept them, with reserve, as they are. For our Master has said, "Be careful of the green algae which flood waters bring." Meaning: take care of the mischief that presents itself as a beautiful woman.

Everything is created to fulfill a need. A thing returns to its place by retracing its original route. One must consider all that is around one in this light. That need comes from your essence, the noble soul that the Lord blew unto you. Always question yourself about the reason for your existence, the purpose of your creation.

Do not spend the numbered breaths which have been given to you just to wander around the face of this planet, without purpose, with actions of no consequence. Every action, every motion, must be for a divine purpose.

Khidr said: "I did not do this on my own, with my own will." Then he raised his head and looked into the night sky and the far stars and said: "I am a poor sick thing." He was talking about his ego.

I beg you to consider this advice: never act in matters of the welfare of your realm without consulting your ministers, who represent all your faculties. In addition to making you more sure of your decision, this will help to

create a feeling of friendship, of confidence, in your ministers. From this feeling of friendship, compassion and concern will be created. And with this wise advice and with justice, your kingdom will be guaranteed its survival. That is why it is said that justice is the basis of the continuance of a realm.

These are the attributes and character of a true leader. Otherwise whoever rules becomes an instrument of destruction and, in the process, also destroys himself.

There are four kinds of leaders. Without forgetting that everything is created from divine beneficence and generosity, the philosophers say that there are four kinds of kings and there is no fifth.

1. A king who is generous, both to himself and to his people.
2. A king who depreciates himself and sees his people as lowly also.
3. A king who is proud of himself and generous to himself but who sees his people as unworthy.
4. A king who is humble, but who is generous and tolerant with his people.

We are not going to point out which of the four would be the best leader, as it is obvious to all in accordance with their own attributes.

Since time immemorial the ones who know the truth have been examining man and what is expected of him. They say that humanity is a station in the creation where

everything comes together and where action becomes possible. It is also a station where that which has been gathered is by association and disassociation. Thus it is also a station of separation. This is the location of the Footstool of the Lord. The Footstool is where divine knowledge is preserved:

To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth.

(Baqarah, 255)

Yet, it is separated from:

What He knows, what is before them and what is behind them.

(Baqarah, 255)

It is at this station that man will wish to surrender that which is imperfect in him before the feet of his Lord in return for the intercession of the earth under his own feet, counting on his Lord's mercy expressed on the Night of Power when :

The angels and the spirit descend by the permission of their Lord, offering their Lord's orders for every affair.

(Qadr, 4)

O deputy of his Lord in the kingdom of the human being: if you have divine knowledge, and have been a channel of good deeds and actions, then you must be generous both to yourself and to your people. If you have none of this, indeed there is no good in you, nor can any good

come from your people. If you know but do not act upon your knowledge, then you are full of yourself but your people will be left destitute. If you have the good will but not the knowledge, and spend yourself unselfishly for others, then you will be left humble while your people prosper.

There are secrets in each of these cases, depending on the circumstances. We leave it to the inner wisdom of those who can understand.

Some may protest and say, "We know of two of these cases and we believe them to be right," and say, "the king who has knowledge and acts upon it is the best." We say that if you believe in one, you cannot ignore the others. All the qualities mentioned in the four kings are facts, and what is right depends on what is needed.

If spiritual sustenance is what is needed, its food is knowledge and inspiration. If something is needed for the growth of the physical self, it must be fed through the senses, and the lack of this causes suffering for the physical being.

Is a man of action not a man of knowledge? If that is so, then his spirit is locked up in a cell, hungry for its sustenance. But a man of knowledge who does not put his knowledge into action is drowned in the sea of intellectual lust. Though he may be sustaining his spirit, his inaction may expose it to situations over which he has no control, and which may cause it disaster.

The most important characteristic to consider is the question of generosity and avarice. Generosity is the ability to satisfy a need to its fullest extent. Avarice is not only the failure to satisfy the need, but also the ignoring of it—and in addition, the forbidding of its satisfaction. There are indeed degrees of this. Meanwhile, the one who gives

more than the need necessitates is a spendthrift, which is also a sin. To find the appropriate response to a need, and the right dose—and not to go to extremes—is essential.

The outward sign of the deputy of the Lord in the human realm is his actions, which have limitations. His inner quality is knowledge. Knowledge is at all times a departure point. It offers a new response for each need, and it has no borders.

The citizens of the kingdom of the human being are of two kinds: those who have always been there, and those who appear for the first time at every instant. The ones who have always been there are also separated into two classes. There are those who have the nationality of the people of Muhammad in the material realm, and those who do not, but are attached to the world of matter.

The ones who appear every instant, the children of the now, are also divided into two categories: the ones who belong collectively to a group, and the ones who do not have an affiliation with anything or anybody, but are just themselves.

These single individuals are also of two sorts: those who are under the influence of their intellect, and those who are under the influence of their egos.

Those who belong to their egos are also divided into two kinds: the first, who are able to obey in spite of their egos; and the second, the ones who revolt because of their egos. The ones who obey are a part of the realm under the influence of divine power, and the ones who revolt are locked up in the world of torment of their corporeal existence.

The individuals who are guided by reason are also divided into two kinds: the ones whose intelligence is exposed, and the ones who are hidden. The hidden ones are the ones who are safe under the protection of the angelic realm.

[Those ranged in ranks say] not one of us but
has a place appointed.

(Saffat, 164)

The ones whose intelligence is exposed are the brides of the Lord. Although they are out in the open, they are like receptacles, holding the treasures of the Lord. Hidden within His treasures, they are covered by the veils of the Lord's jealousy, of His love for them. None know them except their Lord, nor do they know any other except their Lord. They are a part of real reality. They are the heart of the city of man. Seek them, so that you will learn.

O generous deputy of the Lord, now that you know the reality of the people of your realm, give all of them the different things that they need, while not forgetting your own needs: to some, knowledge; to some, wisdom; to some, what they lack in perfection; to some, help with your actions. To all, show generosity, without surpassing its boundaries. That is the way of our master, Muhammad, may God's peace and blessings be upon him.

The perfection of generosity is piety. There is an asceticism within the one who gives without reserve, renouncing all except what he has at the moment. The pride of a nation is the piety and asceticism of their king, because he has given up everything for the sake of his people. Generosity is the result and sign of care and love for others. And care and love are signs of one's closeness to others. And unity is the result of closeness between people in the realm of a human being.

God says:

And God has created you and your deeds.

(Saffat, 96)

Under the veil of the creation of your deeds by God, be selfless. Attribute nothing to yourself—in your actions, in your faith, in your words—so that you can make His realm your home, open the divine light within it, and see that which is real by it.

Leave to others what they have in their hands. Do not want anything from them, and leave what belongs to the Lord to the Lord. Then you will be loved both by the people and by your Lord. Do not claim anything which goes out from you as yours, no action as your doing. Then indeed you will have become a man of conscience and reached true piety and asceticism.

And if one day they bring you a gift from their world which befits the desires of your flesh, thank them for their gift, and beg them to take it from you and give it as a gift to the ones who are in need. But if they insist that you keep it, then take it, and give it to the needy yourself.

Many times before I have warned many in our land, and in other lands, about these same predicaments. They have not valued my advice; they haven't seen the dangers closing in upon them.

When our Master, God's peace and blessings upon him, gathered with his Companions, he used to seat the men of wisdom in the front ranks. They spoke little, for it is best to say the right things in a few words, rather than make long extrapolations. Every excess has poison in it. The one who says little is hidden under his calculated words and is not in need of the approval of others. He is a true ascetic in his silence. This should be the way of a true guide, the imam.

CHAPTER 6

ON JUSTICE AND THE AUTHORITY OF THE IMAM

The Imam is the leader of a realm where he applies the law, confirmed by divine authority. He dispenses justice, and he is the final authority. As the divinely ordained imam in the realm of your being, you have to rule in justice and dispense justice among your people and the officials of your government. This is necessary for the endurance of peace and order in your realm, and also to keep your enemies subdued. You are the trustee of the divine cause and of justice. A realm governed with justice is bound to be safe and prosperous.

Whether in olden times or now, justice does not age; it is as it ever was, always sought-after and respected, because it is a divine balance with which all is weighed in this material realm. It is the same divine balance which, on the Day of Judgment, will be used to weigh the right and the wrong and to differentiate the righteous person from the wrongdoer. It is the basis of the divine law. What man owns is his physical being, which is judged by his soul is due to law and justice. If there is no justice to equalize and balance the material existence of the human being, that being is bound for destruction. The wise of the olden times have said: "Greater is the benefit of justice than all the gold in the treasuries of a kingdom." The Lord says:

God commands justice, the doing of good . . .

(*Nahl*, 90)

And he warns the unjust by saying:

Woe to those who deal in fraud, those who,
when they have to receive by measure from
man, exact full measure, but when they have to
give by measure or weight to man, give less
than due.

(Tatfif, 1-3)

and:

Do they not think that they will be called to
account on a mighty day?

(Tatfif, 4-5)

When Luqman, God's peace and blessings be upon
him, advises his son, he says:

Do not travel far nor raise your voice.

(Luqman, 19)

And Allah says:

Neither speak thy prayer aloud nor speak it in
a low tone, but seek a middle course between.

(Bani Isra'il, 110)

And He says:

Make not the hand tied [like a miser] to thy
neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach
[like a spendthrift].

(Bani Isra'il, 29)

Our Master, the Prophet of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said to Abu Bakr, his blessed Companion, "Please raise your voice a little," while he said to his other Companion, the blessed 'Umar, "Speak softly." And one day, when the straps of one of his sandals broke, he took off both of them, to be able to walk in a balanced way.

The wise of olden times said, "Don't be too sweet, you will make people's mouths water. Don't be too sharp, you will turn people's stomachs." The principle of justice is balance, equality, the middle course. It must be applied to all things. Let justice rule in both the exterior expression and the inner meaning of what you say and in what you do. Apply it first to yourself, then to those who are closest to you—your ministers and the officials governing the realm of your being—and then to all those over whom you have authority.

CHAPTER 7

ON THE QUALITIES TO BE SOUGHT IN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE DEFINITION OF HIS DUTIES

There must be a tie between the owner and what he owns, and that tie is your minister. He is your helper in applying your rules in the realm where you rule. He has to be intelligent and active, so that he is able to put your decisions into action. The name of your chief minister is Intellect. Indeed, when the Lord made you His deputy in the realm of your existence, He also assigned you your prime minister, Intellect. Intellect responds to divine orders. He is the one who rights the wrong. He is the visible ruler of the realm. He is the symbol, the sign of authority.

The Lord says:

There are indeed signs for men of understanding.

(Al-i 'Imran, 190)

God addresses His ordinances as an obligation to the ones with hearts, but to hear and understand His ordinances, He has created Intellect. That is why He has assigned Intellect as the prime minister to His deputy, the Imam. His duty is to record and analyze and retain the continuous flow of divine messages, ever present and continuously presented in the environment of this universe. You need to be exposed to some of these influences. From some, you must be kept safely hidden, just as a horse must

be tied up in the shade, safe from the sun, on a hot day. This precaution, which will keep your realm safe and sound, is the duty of your prime minister, Intellect.

If Intellect is able to carry the responsibilities for which it was created, then indeed he is carrying both the material and the spiritual load of governing your realm. On the other hand, the position of the prime minister, Intellect, is like that of the moon in relation to you, who are like the sun. It is your light which is reflected upon him when you are not visible. He is your mouthpiece, the channel through which the action coming from your power flows. As such, he may appear to be taking initiatives, while he is only following your orders.

When you, as the king of the human realm, appear, like the sun rising, eliminating the veil of darkness where the moon shone like a lamp—then the power of your prime minister disappears. When the order comes from the Imam, the deputy of God, all veils, all doubts, disappear. Nothing but your grandeur and majesty and awe appear.

God Makes the spirit to light by His command
on whom He pleases of His servants that he
may warn of the day of meeting, the day when
they come forth. Nothing concerning them
remains hidden from Him.

(*Mu'min*, 15-16)

Thus the night turns into day, the veils are lifted, doubts are dissipated, barriers are lifted. It is only when the king is in seclusion that his minister is in view. The minister takes the king's place, forbids that which the king

forbids, orders that which he orders, does what the king would have done. He is the mouthpiece of the true ruler.

When the moon rises at the same time as the sun, there is no glitter to it, it fades away, as the light of the sun overpowers it. The moon has no rank in the light of the day. But when the sun sets, the moon shines with the light of the sun reflected in it. The ones who see it think that the moon's light is from itself. To understand this is an introduction to the understanding of reality.

Ponder upon what God says:

Say, I seek refuge with the Lord who cherishes
mankind.

The ruler of mankind, the god of mankind,
from the imagination, whispered, by the evil one
who withdraws after his whisper.

He who whispers into the heart of mankind
amongst jinn and amongst men.

(*Nas*, 1-6)

My master Abu Madyan, one of the two spiritual guides of this world in his time, said that it was revealed to him that the meaning of the *ruler of mankind* is in the verse:

Blessed is He in whose hand is the kingdom
and He is possessor of power over all things.

(*Mulk*, 1)

He also said that the meaning of the *god of mankind* is the station of the spiritual pole, which God delegates and is present upon the world at all times.

When the Lord Most High first built the form and shape of His deputy, man, and blew his soul unto him from His own soul, He taught him all that is necessary to govern this realm. All that He placed in him was beautiful. Thus God's deputy in the universe has all the faculties to satisfy all the needs of all that is under his rule, down to the smallest detail. Then He poured upon him, every moment, the divine rules and prescriptions to solve all occurrences, and wrote upon his forehead all knowledge, where all could read it. Yet man is unable to judge what solution befits what problem. This is also a secret within the divine wisdom. Perchance the secret is that he too is in need of a helper, a successor who knows himself, who knows what is around him and who knows how to serve.

Then the Lord set His deputy onto the throne of uniqueness and put upon his shoulders the mantle of oneness and bejeweled and crowned him with His own attributes. It is due to all of these that he appears with the majesty and grandeur of his Lord reflected upon him.

If, of all that appears in man, only a speck should be his own, that drop of beauty would cure him of his self. This is the description of the station of God's deputy.

So, look upon yourself. May you be able to see this incredible grandeur and power placed in you. Is it not sufficient proof of God's existence and the existence of a Hereafter, if we can detect this with our own eyes in this life?

God placed His deputy in that high station, and then set Intellect into him. When Intellect entered into him, it sieved his essence and became manifest as its substance. It is only then that all the wisdom and the knowledge written on the face of God's deputy became visible.

But until one sees one's self, one seeks everything outside of oneself, while all there is, is in oneself. The Lord says:

What you seek is in your own selves. Will you not then see?

(Zariyat, 21)

If indeed you saw, and stopped looking elsewhere—where you will not find what you seek, and where all that you will get for your efforts will be fatigue—you would find peace. The proverb says: "They take to the road with a hope to find. Wherever they go, their hope to find travels with them. Forever they will hope to find, without finding."

When Intellect encounters a problem to solve, it needs to see the face of the Imam. Upon looking at him, not only the problem's solution, but its purpose, becomes clear to him. He need not be close to the Imam. It suffices to be near enough to make out his voice.

The solution of each problem is as close or as far as the distance necessary for the two to communicate. If the question is academic, the solution is in logic.

Neither the deputy of the Lord, nor his prime minister, Intellect, is material, so the conversation between the two is wordless and soundless. The ear and the tongue in question are not the ear and tongue of the head, but those of the heart. It is left to you to understand their meaning, for the meaning is in the interlocutor. When, in the heart of the mind, the divine spirit overflows, it produces inaudible and invisible signs whose meaning is understood without effort.

That is true communication. That is how the Creator meant communication to be. That is why He placed the

mind on a tower at the top of the realm of your being so that it could see, far and wide, the whole of the kingdom. And that is why He placed in the same tower, next door to it, a treasure-house of memory, where all that is worthy in the kingdom is collected and stored. The home of the mind and the treasure-house of remembrance must be close, for the mind must have access to the treasury in order to perform its function.

O one whom God has chosen as His deputy, realize that it is an obligation for you to cooperate with your minister, Intellect, and to support him and to protect him, as you have to coexist. Your peace and order and prosperity in fact, the existence of your kingdom—depends upon his ability to serve you.

If the mind attaches itself to anyone but you, then it can only work against you, which will cause incalculable disasters. Haven't you seen the destruction of men who have lost their minds, and the inability of the spirit to cure this ill? Thus as long as Intellect is safe, you are safe. He is the hand with which you hold and the eye with which you see.

In ruling your domain, before you decide anything, consult with your minister, Intellect. Put your decisions into action only with his agreement. Then, with the security of your solidarity, and with the strength coming from both of you, follow the application of your decision. As long as he is with you and he works for you, do not doubt the righteousness of the advice of Intellect. The Lord Himself has entrusted Intellect to judge what is right, and has protected him from falling under the influence of the mischief of conjecture, doubt, and imagination.

Know that imagination and its effects of doubt and

conjecture do travel among the population of your kingdom, and that they have a trick of disguising themselves in the appearance of your prime minister, Intellect. They even appear more subservient, obedient, and agreeable than he. Many are fooled by them, fall under their influence, and become confused, having lost contact with reality. Hold on to reality, and protect yourself from the distortions in imagination's sight. Otherwise you will be tyrannizing yourself—for there is no good in a realm where rationality does not rule.

It falls on you to discern in your prime minister, Intellect, all the attributes of perfection, so that there can be no chance of confusing him with the imagination which attempts to imitate him. So here are the attributes which will enable you to recognize the true prime minister, charged to serve you.

His personality is justice. The sign of divine inspirations poured upon him is his head. Beauty is upon his face. The sign of his ability to protect you and your realm is in the shape of his eyebrows. His eyes show his conscience. His awareness and discrimination are in how his forehead joins his nose. His trustworthiness is in the shape of his mouth. Wisdom is in his tongue. His self-assurance is in the shape of his nose. His forbearance is in his chest. His valor is in his biceps and his thighs. His confidence is in his joints. His righteousness is in his wrists. His generosity is in his palms. His freedom is in his posture. His productivity is on his left side; his ability is on his right side. His virtue is upon his belly. His chastity is in his private parts. His direction is in his legs. His goal is in the soles of his feet. His heart is heedful, ever awake. His wisdom comes from his soul.

His humility shows in his clothes, his gentleness in his adornment. His humanity is his jewel. His love and fear of God are his crown. His sincerity is his path. His faith is the lamp in his hand to show the way. His advice is in his character; his knowledge is in his foresight. His wealth is in his poverty. His name is Intelligence.

If you ever see such a one, make him your prime minister with certainty, and make him your companion at night, to tell you the tales of other places and times.

Such a helper will make you see reality, distinguish right from wrong and the possible from the impossible, and help you find the truth.

CHAPTER 8

ON INSIGHT, INBORN AND TAUGHT BY THE RELIGION

The Lord says in the Holy Qur'an :

Behold, in this are signs for those who, by their insight, do understand.

(Hijr, 75)

God's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon his soul, says: "Beware of the insight of the faithful, for he sees with the light of his Lord."

Know that insight is a light shed by the divine light, with which the faithful find their way and reach salvation. That light also makes visible all that there is to see in the material world. If we could see the real realities, they would become signs and proofs of the existence of the Creator, and teach us divine wisdom.

The natural, inborn, human insight enables us to identify and isolate these realities, one by one, while the insight taught by religion sees all as a whole, because religion has come upon us as a divine order and mercy from the one and unique God, who says to us:

[You] did not do it of [your] own accord. [It is] a mercy from your Lord.

(Kahf, 82)

Only those who have been taught religious insight understand the deficiency of inborn insight, which separates one reality from another and may lead to the wrong

conclusion. For the God-given natural insight draws its conclusions from associations, theories, past experiences, and logic—and these are but veils, which can only be lifted by learning the rules of religious insight.

Neither the realization of the existence of an inner eye which is able to detect true reality, nor the wish and possibility of educating this inner eye with the help of religious education, is given to everybody. It is a divine gift bestowed upon a few who are worthy.

What we are about to tell is for all, to enable them to see each other really. Man is a social being. He needs to be with other men to communicate, to understand, to cooperate, to befriend, to love. It is necessary for him to know who is what: who is good, who is bad, who is right or wrong for him. Perchance some signs, which we will indicate, will help to lift the veil and open his insight. Then through the prescriptions of religion, the Lord will open for him a door where His light will show him realms that he has not seen before.

O my brother, may God enable you to see and to understand that you must show all care in choosing your ministers and helpers in governing the kingdom of your being. Choose them from among the most majestic, beautiful ones, with gentle and joyful hearts. Let them be neither too tall nor too short. Their bodies and their flesh should be soft and muscular and cool to the touch. Their skin should be white with a tinge of white and yellow; their hair of medium length, straight and black, without a sheen of red; of smooth face, with dark eyes which do not show any arrogance. Their heads should be round with slight bulges at the sides, upon necks medium in length and thickness. Their whole being should be dignified and

calm. Their thighs should be shaped with long and soft muscles, their voices neither sharp and loud nor soft and inaudible.

They should be open-handed, and they should be careful in their speech. They should have a happy disposition, eyes shining with joy and peace. They should not be interested in possessions, nor have a desire to dominate others, and in their actions they should neither move too slowly, nor hurry.

These are the characteristics which have been valued by all of the wise of olden times. Our Master and our guide, Muhammad, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, and my teacher, Abul-Qasim, were born with these traits, and their exterior was the sign of their inner perfection. Therefore befriend those who resemble them.

If the Lord sheds His divine light upon the exterior signs of the inner man, and you appreciate it, then you are among the select who possess both the natural insight and the insight taught by religion. Then there should be no doubt nor fear: the kingdom of your being will be under your rule and control.

The wise men of old assure us—and I know it by my own experience—that those among men who have a uniform and temperate nature are those who have the exterior signs, some of which we have mentioned. There are other signs which have to be considered.

A person who is hairy has an inclination towards depravity, wickedness, and disloyalty. Excessive hair also indicates lack of intelligence. Men with thick hair yet with a natural high forehead, who also have a thin beard, are bad-tempered and obstinate. One should avoid such people, for they are as dangerous as poisonous snakes. Coarse

hair indicates bravery and boldness, also strong-mindedness, while soft hair is a sign of cowardice, indecisiveness, and lack of intelligence. Excessive hair on the chest and on the belly is a sign of a harsh and wild nature and behavior, someone who is able to hurt others, and who is lacking in understanding. Blond hair shows lack of intelligence, someone who is critical without justification and who is liable to flare up unexpectedly. Black hair is an indication of intelligence, of heedfulness, and of a just nature. Light brown hair is a sign of someone who is potentially sickly, defective in judgment, yet who makes excuses for wrongdoings.

A smooth and flat forehead is an indication of arrogance and the character which loves to create confusion and hostility amongst people; while a wrinkled forehead, of medium width and height, is a sign of a loyal person who is heedful, loving, prudent, and able.

Large ears indicate a person with an ability to memorize what he hears, though he is unable to understand what he has memorized, and is ignorant of its content and application. People with tiny ears have a tendency to be foolish. They also have a tendency to steal.

Thick eyebrows, extending towards the temples, indicate absentmindedness and confusion and also arrogance. Fine eyebrows, of medium length, are the mark of a heedful, sensitive, and intelligent person.

Blue eyes are a sign of bad character. The worst of eyes are turquoise blue. When eyes are large and protruding, they mark an envious, lazy, and untrustworthy person. If they are also blue, these characteristics are extreme, and that person is also a liar. If someone's eyes are medium in size and dark, inset, with dark outlines on the lids, he is sympathetic, sensitive, attentive, considerate, and trustworthy.

If someone has a hard look in his eyes it is clear that he is not a good person. People with a dull look in their eyes are usually coarse, ignorant, and harsh in nature. A shifty, quick look in the eyes is an indication of deceitfulness, cruelty, and fraud. Eyes with a tinge of red in them indicate someone who is brave, bold, and decent. Reddish eyes with yellow dots in the iris indicate a total lack of conscience, an evil disposition, and malice.

A thin nose indicates a person who is hasty and hypocritical. A big nose which hangs over the mouth is a sign of a brave and valorous man. A short and flat nose is a sign of a lascivious person with heightened sexual appetite. Large nostrils are an indication of a man who is quick in temper. A broad and flat nose, medium in size, shows a person who lacks judgment, who lies, and who talks nonsensically. The best kind of nose is medium in length and thickness and straight, indicating an intelligent, sensitive, and dependable person.

A large mouth is a sign of a brave character. Thick lips are a sign of foolishness. Lips which are of medium thickness and tinged with red indicate mildness, composure, and equilibrium. Crooked teeth with space in between mark a tendency towards intrigue and cheating, and undependability. Straight, even teeth are a sign of a rational and dependable person.

A face with fat cheeks marks the crude and ignorant. A fine, long, and pale face is a sign is an immoral, terse, and insincere person. A person whose face blushes, whose eyes are lowered, and who shows the signs of the slightest smile is indeed someone who is impressed by you and likes you, and is a possible friend.

Someone who speaks with a loud and clear voice is

a valorous person. An audible, gentle voice belongs to a conscientious and laborious person. A soft bass voice is an indication of a logical, organized person who is at the same time serious and calm. A high and measured voice, which produces skillfully chosen words, may belong to someone who is hiding his ignorance, who is a liar and has bad intentions. A coarse bass voice belongs to a person with bad temper and bad character. Someone who mumbles and speaks from his nose is someone, who, in spite of his lack of intelligence, is trying to appear clever. Someone who moves his hands, his head, and his body while he is speaking is over-confident and arrogant. Someone who talks unnecessarily at length, without making sense, is out to deceive. Someone who speaks with measured words, and whose hands move expressively, has a firm understanding of what he says and is logical.

A short neck is an indication of deceitfulness, immorality, and ungratefulness. A thin and long neck is an indication of lack of consideration, cowardice, and an irate nature. If that person also has a small head, there is lack of intelligence. An excessively thick neck shows over-sensuality, gluttony, and ignorance. A neck which is medium in length and thickness is a sign of honesty and sincerity, dependability and a healthy mind.

A large and protruding abdomen is a sign of insensitivity, stupidity, and cowardice. A moderate belly and a narrow chest show superior intelligence, a person who is able to make right decisions.

Wide shoulders and back belong to people who are brave, yet neither too intelligent nor too serious. A curved back and hunched shoulders belong to obstinate and irate people, yet they may also be a sign of weakness and result-

ing meekness. A flat and straight back is a desirable sign of good character.

Square shoulders belong to people with bad opinions and bad intentions towards others. Long arms are a sign of selflessness, generosity, and courageousness—but short arms belong to cowards, who have a tendency towards wickedness and the causing of mischief among people.

A rectangular hand and long fingers belong to a person with an artistic temperament, whose actions are purposeful and who has the capacity for leadership.

When the soles of the feet are broad and fleshy their owners intend to remain ignorant, are cruel, and have a tendency to tyrannize others. The thin and soft soles of narrow feet belong to intriguers, who have a tendency to instigate trouble. If the heels are fine and pointed it is a sign of cowardice. Heavy and thick heels show bravery.

Thick legs with visible veins mark lack of intelligence and lack of health. Someone who walks with long strides at a medium pace is a person who is capable of calculating the outcome of his actions, and therefore is apt to be successful. Short steps at a slow pace mark someone who is unsure, insecure, and full of doubt.

These are some of the signs which men of insight might use in judging themselves and others. The judgments are based upon the deviation of extremes from a temperate median. Does the spiritual state of someone relate totally to such appearances? All we can say is that the human spirit has a tendency which may turn towards light or towards darkness, and this is reflected upon the physical nature.

The essence of the soul is between light and darkness. The elements of the physical being and the essential

nature are created to coexist as a whole creation. It is like the coexistence of Intellect and the atoms of the physical being. The atoms of the physical being are like pure darkness, and Intellect is like pure light, and we are in the middle, in light and darkness, both.

Which of the two conditions will have the power to overcome us? If they were of equal strength—better still, if they were united and one—then all of us would have received what is rightfully ours. Yet, some of us, sometimes, are overcome only by light, and some of us at other times are overcome by darkness. Then we appear either too tall or too short, or white or black.

Each opposite is neither more nor less than its opposite. The white we see pours from that which is white into our eyes. That whiteness has now lost its character; nothing of it is left; it is all in our eyes. Thus its whiteness is harmed and lost—so its state is unacceptable. On the other hand, that darkness whose nature is blind to the light in itself is also unacceptable. So when separate, they are both unacceptable. But from time to time, alternately, they unite in one of us. As our Master the Prophet, God's peace and blessings be upon him, said, "From time to time I have a time when I am filled with my Lord, so that nothing else can fit into me."

Yet he had a time for his blessed Companions, and he had a time for his family. With some he spent more time, and with others, less. What is observed by the senses, and its meaning, are separate, but they are joined together in understanding—like the separation of Heaven and Hell, which are joined together in the expectation of Purgatory.

Hair is hair, but it may be thin or thick. Thus dif-

ferent appearances are reflections of different inner states, which become connected when they are understood.

For instance, a long face with a sympathetic expression is a sign of a positive person who is eloquent.

A pair of eyes which are equal in size and shape is a sign of a conscientious person. If the eyes are inset and dark, that person is capable of understanding hidden meanings and able to solve mysteries.

If the head is symmetrical, it shows superior intelligence. If the shoulders are round, that person is forbearing. A straight neck is a sign of a person who has an inquiring mind, who is not a materialist.

If a person possesses a logical mind, he is able to adjust and direct his words in accordance with the understanding of his interlocutor, and he is bound to be understood and agreed with.

If the hip joints of a person are not bony but fleshy, that person has a tendency to lack principles and shift his opinions according to his self-interest and to win favor. He will need a lot of help to save himself when his alliances are not clear.

A naturally quiet and introverted person is able to keep secrets, but if such a person is clear in his speech when he speaks, it is a sign that he does not know much.

If the tips of a person's fingers are long and finely shaped, that person is a gourmet and very particular in his choice of food. A broad palm belongs to a person who is not attached to the world and the worldly.

A person who speaks little and who laughs rarely is a contemplative who is more interested in spiritual matters. So are people who have a tinge of yellow or of darkness in their skin.

A person in whose eyes there is an expression of

peace and joy is able to attract the interest and love of other people.

If a person is not ambitious, possessive, and desirous of worldly goods, he will avoid most of the problems and dangers of this world.

If someone is not interested in dominating other people, desiring to be the chief, that person is liable to be working for the perfection of his own state.

Someone who is neither hurried nor slow in his actions is not weak; on the contrary, he is a clever person whose actions correspond to his ability and strength.

We have given above a few examples of characteristics which complement the elements of earth, fire, water, and air from which man was created, as indicators of the inborn, natural insight. Now we will explain insight taught by the religion, which is much more important, and which is the foundation of this subject.

May God open the eyes of your heart, shedding His divine light: The angelic realm, which contains the potential of future creation, incorporeal existences, the meaning of all and everything to come, and divine power, is the element from which the visible world is created and, therefore, the material world is under the influence and domination of the angelic realm. The movement, the sound, the voice, the ability to speak, to eat and to drink is not from the existences themselves in this visible, material world. They all pass through the invisible world of the angelic realm.

For example, an animal does not move on its own unless it is motivated for a certain purpose. This motivation comes from inside the animal, from its heart, what we call its instinct, which receives its orders from the invisible

world. There the power to move the animal is kept, while the resistance to this motivation is from the elements of this visible world.

We think that we see with our eyes. The information, the influences of perception, are due to our senses—while the real influence, the meaning of things, the power behind what sees and what is seen, can be reached neither by the senses, nor by deduction and analysis, comparisons, contrasts, and associations made through intellectual theories. The invisible world can only be penetrated by the eye and the mind of the heart. Indeed, the reality of this visible world also can only be seen by the eye and the mind of the heart.

What we think we see is but veils which hide the reality of things; things whose truth, whose meaning may not be revealed until these veils are lifted. It is only when the dark veils of imagination and preconception are raised that the divine light will penetrate the heart, enabling the inner eye to see. Then either the sunlight or the light of a candle will become a metaphor for the divine light.

The principal veils which render the inner eye blind are arrogance, egotism, desires of the flesh, lust; as well as the influence of others who are afflicted by these sicknesses. If man truly believed that he had an inner eye, a mirror where only the truth is reflected, and if he made efforts to rid himself of the veils which hide reality from it, then it would be possible for the divine light of the invisible realms to join with the light inside him, and he would see all that is hidden there. As we are now, we are like the blind who feel the warmth of the sunshine, but are unable to see the light. When your eyes are closed, does it matter whether there are objects in front of you, whether they are

near or far, whether they are beautiful or not? That is what we are concerned with.

That veil which hinders our vision is very heavy to lift. Only those chosen by God—the prophets, the saints, the ones who love Him and the ones whom He loves—can pierce through it. Then whether the object to be seen is in front of your eyes or not, whether it is near or very far, also does not matter! Our Master the Prophet, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, used to say to his Companions: "I can see you even when my back is turned."

The mystics who devote their lives to come close to their Lord are encouraged by their Lord in their efforts by what we call miracles. They are shown people and places, right in front of them, that are somewhere else, miles away. Though they are in the West, they see Mecca, far off in the East.

Many such visions are experienced by those who seek to know their Lord, especially if their affection for our Master, Muhammad, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, draws them to be like him—for then they inherit his qualities and are blessed with divine favor. All praise be to God that I myself have experienced this.

These people of elevated state are called *abdāl*. Sometimes their ability to see the secrets beyond the visible world is taken away from them. That is a sign that they have reached the highest state aspired to by every human being, the state of true servanthood to the Lord. Then they are the heirs of the prophets, and no longer simply people who know what is unknown to others in this world. Their knowledge belongs to the invisible angelic realms; they are between two worlds.

For people in this state, there is no longer a

separation or distance between the visible and the invisible, neither between their exterior and their interior being. The veils which hid things are all lifted. All that is left of them is a ringing in their ears. All their secrets are now raised to the surface and exposed. All the paths leading to the unknown are open to them.

Then when the view of this reality is left behind, it is as if another divine curtain falls upon them. But the loving, generous Lord replaces what He has taken away by a beautiful multicolored light which He sheds upon a part of the material world and a part of the invisible realm both, linking them together, but leaving the greater part hidden in the dark.

I pray and beg my Lord that He cover you with that light when you yourself become pure, clear, and transparent. This is the level of divine inspiration. The proof of it is that the one who has reached it has the joy of hearing and understanding the word of his Lord without sounds or letters. God asks His Prophet to say:

I am not the first of the messengers and I know not what will be done with me or with you. I follow that which is revealed to me by inspiration.

(*Ahqaf*, 9)

And God also says:

It is not fitting for a man that God should speak to him except by inspiration.

(*Shura*, 51)

But He also makes His Prophet say:

I say not to you, I have with me the treasures of God, nor do I know the unseen, nor do I say to you that I am an angel. I follow only that which is revealed to me. Are the blind and the seeing alike?

(*An'am*, 50)

Thus even a perfect man can only see what he is made to see, and know what is his due to know, from the hidden realms. But what is seen and known from the invisible will have its effect upon our visible world through the influence of the words of those who have learned by inspiration. And they will be made to say nothing more than what they have been taught.

This knowledge, although vast, is finite. This permits us to weigh and measure things and to come to conclusions. God, in his infinite wisdom and mercy, has limited our knowledge, for infinity is inconceivable for the human being and is only known to the divine wisdom. Allah says:

Say: If the sea were ink to write the words of my Lord, the sea would surely be exhausted before the words of my Lord were exhausted.

(*Kahf*, 109)

And He says:

And if all the trees on the earth were pens and the sea, with seven more seas added to it, were ink, the words of God would not be exhausted.

(*Luqman*, 27)

The veil of darkness itself, which hides the unknown, contains infinite knowledge. It is the knowledge of eternal divine logic. Men try to investigate and discover some things in it. The more they know, the more they realize that there is no end to it.

The highest level of knowledge can only be obtained by ecstatic inspired knowing, which opens the eye of the heart and enables man finally to discover that which is permitted to him to know.

The ultimate knowledge which men wish to attain is: Who is it who furnishes this knowledge and teaches the method of learning it? For that answer is the proof of the truth of what we know. Do not seek it elsewhere. He has placed that proof in you, yourself.

God says:

And We record everything in a clear book.

(*Ya Sin*, 12)

That book is the Imam, the soul, the guide of the human realm of which you are the king, the deputy of God. His wisdom and power are infinite, and the sign of that is in the intimate meaning of His words. With what we are able to understand of them, we can see the frontiers that separate us from His infinite realm.

What we see with is insight, the eye of the heart—and the sign of someone who possesses *this insight* is that a beautiful character and morals are expressed in his actions. Those are the fruits of his understanding and his knowledge. A human being who has reached that state is at the highest level of spiritual union with God. That level is reached only by understanding and living in accordance with the Holy Qur'an. God says:

Behold, in this are signs for those who by tokens do understand.

(Hijr, 75)

Spiritual communion with God affects the senses and creates a sharpened sensitivity which enables one to see the invisible realms. Materialists deny this ability. Many do not believe in it. But it is a science like any other science, dependent upon trials, experiments, and continued efforts. It is a knowledge initiated by, and dependent upon, the faith and pleasure one derives from the glimpses of truth allowed us by that natural God-given insight which everyone has.

The one who sees with this insight sees with divine light. The light of the Lord can make known only truth. This fact, and the acknowledgment of it, is uncovered only when natural insight is complemented by the canons of religion.

The Lord has placed special signs upon all objects which are visible to everyone in accordance to their ability.

Someone came to 'Uthman, the third blessed caliph after the Messenger of God, and said, "Will anyone after our Master, God's peace and blessings be upon him, receive revelations from God?"

The caliph 'Uthman, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "Know that none will receive direct revelations from Allah in the way that he did—yet I heard him say, 'Beware of the insight of the faithful, for he sees with the light of Allah.'" And he said to the man, "I see the glimmer of this divine light in your own eyes."

These glimmers of divine light are bestowed by the

Lord upon some fortunate ones whose faith is weak, so that their hearts will be strengthened and warmed towards their Lord. Yet this glimmer will disappear unless it is protected and made permanent by the prescriptions contained in the Holy Qur'an.

So listen to what God says to you in that Book. Seek in it direction for your actions and your love. Your heart should beat with that love when you believe in what you hear, and confirm it with your acts.

When your faith is weak and you forget your Lord, get hold of those signs which God has placed in everything around you to remind you of Himself. Then with the confirmation and proof of their truth, taught to you by your religion, your heart will find strength and your faith will be affirmed.

If you are able to see the signs of your Lord around you, but do not understand their meaning because of your lack of religious training and its result, you may be accused, even by your own self, of seeing only sorcery or illusion.

You may ask yourself, What is the value of seeing someone who is blond, or has blue eyes, or a large nose, and so forth? Those who see these signs with their natural, inborn insight think in opposites—a thing is either good or bad. Signs which indicate acceptable, proper qualities are put on one side and those which indicate bad qualities are put on the other. Then there follows the consideration of very white; whiter than white; more or less; yellow hair or blue eyes; dark eyes or fine nose: they condemn and praise the extremes, but are confused when qualities approach one another, where the bad may become good.

When we see this happening, we question this kind

of categorization of the beautiful and the ugly, and say that in this visible world of ours there is no such thing as beautiful and ugly. We can only attribute such qualities when we consider these signs in the light of religious teaching. Our purpose is not to praise or blame, but by any and every means, to bring the two extremes to the middle, to the median, and to make each thing acceptable and praiseworthy.

Every human being fits one of the following three characteristics:

1. Someone who is aware of himself alone, separating himself from everyone and everything, claiming that his life and his actions are his own. He is thus totally blind and inconsiderate of all that religion teaches, and will indeed go as far as to change the precepts of religion to fit his own purposes. He is an enemy who has set himself to destroy the divine harmony. Thus, he is blameworthy. May God protect us from being one of these, and may He protect us from them.
2. Someone who is open to what is around him and considers himself to be part of it, sees himself as like some people and wishes to be like some others. In his wish to be like others, he may well try to be like the people in the first category as easily as like those in the next, who follow the precepts of religion.
3. Someone who hears and understands the word of the Lord and follows its precepts, walking where it leads him in his life, step by step, moment by moment. He follows in the footsteps of the one whom God has sent as the embodiment of His words. He walks behind his Prophet

and stops when he stops. God loves the one who lives like this.

He made His Prophet say:

Follow me and God will love you and forgive your sins.

(Al-i 'Imran, 31)

The one who follows the Beloved of God certainly loves God, and God will certainly forgive his sins and make him pure. He is the one who has found salvation and eternal joy.

This is how extremes are confronted and two opposites are united: How shall one judge someone who is not participating in prayer while a congregation is worshipping, but sitting and watching them quietly? Is he necessarily a hypocrite or a nonbeliever?

We see a man sitting quietly and not participating in the prayer—that is like what we see of this material, visible world. Whether this person is against worship or faith or God—that is like what we do not normally see in the invisible realms. If we judge what we see with the simple rules of religion, we may come to the conclusion that this man is an infidel unless he confirms his faith by saying “There is no god but God and Muhammad is his servant and Messenger.” But according to the canons of faith we are obliged to protect the life and the property of this man, and leave him be. That is how our view, our thoughts, and our actions must be.

CHAPTER 9

ON THE ATTRIBUTES AND DUTIES OF THE SCRIBE

The Lord, to guarantee success to His governor, has bestowed upon him a character more perfect than any other in the creation. He has created for him such a refined, high, miraculous existence that even the souls in the invisible realm are in awe. The Prophet Idris, God's peace be upon him, who was the first among the prophets to write with a pen, glorifies him.

The Imam whom God has charged to govern the realm of the human being is given compassion and generosity. The good which comes from the Lord passes through his hands, and the decision is his, whether to distribute it or not. He is also the one through whom the holy commandments are issued. He is the center of all wealth and kindness and ease; from him, all the blessings are spread to the four corners of the human realm. He is the one who makes the poor, rich and the bad spirit, a good one. He is the place within the universal soul where everything is registered and recorded. That place is an existence in itself, which the Imam, the owner of the universal soul and mind who rules the human realm, has set free.

In that place, where the records of the Imam are kept, the commands of inspirational knowledge are also written. When the commands of inspirational knowledge are acted upon, they materialize, and are given the name of the authority of the Imam.

Now the book, the records, and the one who records

are materialized. Their values and their attributes have to be known.

Know that the Lord has created, in His vast kingdom, a holy element which He swears by: a secret, guarded Tablet and a grand Pen, which writes what no one else can write, nor can anyone change what it has written.

When the first-created Pen moves on the sacred Tablet, it writes the orders of the divine will. The truth thus written reaches all existence and is shared by all existence, and the Lord knows what each being has received. That book is sent so that the creation—which did not exist, nor would have existed, nor could have existed by itself—might face its Creator. Now all we have to do is to find who and where the writer is.

The philosopher says: "The Pen of the Lord and His Tablet are extended to become my pen and paper, and my hand, which holds the pen, moves by what the Lord has sworn in the invisible realms. Thus I am made to walk, and what I see around is just chance, my destiny."

The name "Scribe" and what it represents is such a beautiful, refined, wise quality that the Imam of the human realm swears by it. Its origin is high above. Where it comes from is the source of that divine wine, made of the sacred grapes of truth, sincerity, and purity.

When the Imam wishes to apply a command from the invisible in this visible world, if the message sinks into the human heart, then it will always be known and remembered and the whole being will find peace and comfort. When that happens, the dark veils over the heart lift, and all that the Imam willed will be written in the heart to stay. Thus the heart becomes the mirror of Intellect. The mind sees, in the mirror of the heart's memory, things that it has never seen before.

When that which is seen in the heart is rationalized by the mind, the mind understands that it is an order from above, and asks the Scribe of memory to come. It shows him what it has seen in the heart as the Lord's commands. The Scribe records the Lord's words, felt by the heart, realized by the mind, upon the tablet of the self—and as they are recorded, they are distributed to all the organs of the body, to all the corners of the kingdom of the human realm.

Thus the heart knows the truth by being the truth. The mind learns from the heart by seeing the truth. The rest learn the truth through the Scribe, by hearsay.

Where is this Scribe? Is he stationed under the Throne of the Lord or under His Footstool, or somewhere between the two? Indeed, his position is high. He is stationed where the Holy Qur'an reigns, the place where right and wrong, truth and falsehood, are separated. That place is by the soul. And the Lord says:

By the soul and the proportion and order given
to it and its enlightenment as to its right and its
wrong.

(Shams, 7-8)

The duty of the Scribe is to record the right as right and the wrong as wrong, according to each different case. He is not given this position simply because he knows how to write. It is because he is from a place like the Throne or the Footstool of the Lord in the invisible realms where there is no right or wrong, where there is no praise or blame.

Below the Footstool is where the self is. That is the place of change, the place of now and later, the place of cleansing and purification. But the place of the Scribe is

right above that realm of the self. When an order comes from above for him to write this holy commandment, it is immutable. Thus right and wrong, praise and blame do not apply to it.

The Scribe receives the order to write from a single source—the treasury of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. All divine orders to the whole of the human kingdom come through that source. The Scribe receives his orders from that source in letters and numbers and words structured in accordance with the understanding of man. He arranges and organizes them in a beautiful way, records them in the diary of his memory, and distributes them wherever they are meant to go. Thus the whole duty and importance of the Scribe is that he records and distributes what comes from the treasury of Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

What is important is that he is the only one who hears the divine orders. Those who receive them from him have not heard the original commands.

What is written belongs to the realm of things evident. He who writes is hidden in the invisible realm. What holds his hand while it is writing is the hand of the Truth Itself. The hand of Truth which moves the hand of the Scribe is often manifest in what he writes, and results in words and numbers and what they produce. If there is a lack of homogeneity and a lack of harmony in the application of the command, it appears when the hand of the Truth is not holding the hand of the Scribe. For the Scribe, in his essence, is free—but what he does is never for himself, and he is protected by his Lord. Nothing and no one can intrude to prevent him from what he is doing, nor can anyone try to change him.

Some wish to catch and imprison the Scribe under the seven layers of earth, or to send him out to the Seventh Heaven—like the Pharaoh, who declared himself God, and Abu Jahl, who thought of the Messenger of Allah as a poor illiterate, and those who resemble them. These think that they are the masters of their own destiny, that they can achieve whatever they will. They care only about themselves, and revere and sanctify only themselves. They hate the truth, and the one who records and declares the truth, more than they hate hellfire.

But indeed, those who do not look upon what is written and accept it are themselves imprisoned deep down in the darkness of the seven layers of earth, or are burning in Hell. If a person cannot conceive with his intellect what is reflected from his heart, he is already sunk in heedlessness and will sink further.

Often the divine commands which the Scribe writes may appear as if in code, hidden. Perchance the key to decipher them is the cognizance of one's soul.

The Scribe has an honored position. The Ruler of the realm of the human being also employs the Scribe as a teller of tales of past happenings, as lessons for his people as well as for himself. As he is often in the company of the Ruler, the Scribe has to have good behavior, good character, has to know how to keep secrets and how to be patient. He must be eloquent in many languages and able to make declarations that will not be misunderstood and, when he receives orders from above, to record them as received, without interpretation and without feeling the necessity to prove the source of the message. He must be confident of his ability to make a single meaning out of what may appear to have two meanings.

If the Ruler detects some vagueness in the writing of the Scribe which does not correspond to what he has dictated to him, and which may suggest another meaning other than what was meant, the Ruler may discredit his Scribe and may end up disliking him. For if there is a possibility of misunderstanding or if there are doubts about it, then there is no longer any value in an instruction. Precisely to avoid such situations, the Scribe must be a master of understanding and of communicating clearly what he has understood. Thus his words must correspond exactly to the meaning. There can be no heavy words nor complicated sentences which might cause confusion as to who is being addressed: the body, or the heart, or the soul.

When the Scribe starts his registration of daily affairs, he should start with offering his respects and praise of the Imam, the guide charged by the Lord to govern the human realm, because the written word about the importance of the Imam—his honor, his beautiful attributes, his justice, his consideration and care for his people—will increase the respect and loyalty felt towards the Imam in all parts of the kingdom of the human being. It is only after this introduction that he should write the edicts of the Imam's orders.

If these orders are considered by general consensus to be good, then they will be received with favor. If they give an impression of imposition, then they will create opposition. Someone asked the saint Abu Yazid al-Bistami, "How can someone revolt against God's commands when he is a believer and fears and loves Allah?" The saint responded, "If Allah so wills, it happens!"

If the Scribe is as already described, then he is in the right place. He is knocking at the right door, asking to

be admitted. Even if he is not let inside, still he knows who the occupant of the house is, for he has come to His door. He must have received blessings and invitation, for God Most High swears by His Scribe. And He offers him all he needs—except the pen and ink and the page to write upon, which the Scribe has to find himself. Then he will make marks on the paper—letters, numbers—which will transmit knowledge, shed light upon truth. But these marks and letters do not have any resemblance to the alphabets of man's invention.

The sacred, secret Tablet of the heavens, where all that is seen and unseen is recorded, is right here with us. Endless words and numbers which guide our existence come from it. As these instructions enter our being and are acted upon, they disappear. Yet they always seem to keep coming. They are always here, and it does not appear that they are ever going to end. This is a secret which enters the heart, and once there, bursts into flames and exhausts itself. It is such a mystery that even those who know best take refuge in it and must seek to learn it.

In truth there are two Tablets, two Books. One is written in the Lord's language and the other is in human tongue. He swears:

By the mountain (of revelation), by a decree
inscribed . . .

(*Tur*, 2)

By His oath on His Book, He announces the existence of the Book in our version. His version belongs high up in the Realm of the Souls; our book is down here in the material universe. We can read the one in our tongue, but

His Book can reach us only by means of revelations and inspirations.

It is like the two sides of a page. One faces up toward the heavens, and contains words written even before the creation of the heavens. The other side of the page faces downward, toward us, and is written in our language. Why can't we read the other side of the page? Because that message was written for the worlds of unconditioned existence. While we inhabit human existence there are both good and bad, right and wrong, material and spiritual. Only reading the other side of the Tablet will save man from this duality.

The Book written for man in his mother tongue is a sample of a form, a model of what should be, an instruction in how to be gathered together in this world of loose strings. This world is fully related in that Book. All those loyal to this world are mentioned in it. It addresses those who have forgotten all about the spiritual realms, whose hearts are filled with the love of this world, whose minds are closed to secret ordinances, but who are interested in the solution of worldly problems in accordance with divine decree. These people are attached to the instructions in that Book. Such are the Qur'anic lawyers, who themselves are written in the Book, who receive intellectual direction from it, while it does nothing for their hearts, which are all covered with dark veils.

The Scribe, following the way of the rationalists, is able to see both sides of things, is aware that this world is quite close to, and is connected with, the heavens. From some signs in the Book written in our tongue he feels the secrets in the heavenly Book written in God's language—which is not hidden far above in the heavens. He is able to understand it by the combination of his mind and his heart.

On some occasions, when a secret is revealed to him, one hears his screams of awe and fear. When you ask him what his Lord has revealed to him, all he can answer is: the truth. He has asked for an answer to a question, and he has received it in the form of a manifestation of his Lord. When this happens, the Lord covers both His manifestation and the one who has received it under veils. If it were possible to tear the veils aside, the causes would disappear: the effects themselves would be self-existent.

When the Scribe sees how a hidden destiny manifests itself in the creation, he diligently follows its traces, reflecting upon it and analyzing its occurrence. Then he is aware when it is repeated. If he sees fit, he makes his findings known. But mostly he talks to himself and records his findings in his own book, which is in his heart. The book in the Scribe's heart is the sacred, secret Tablet which contains all things to do and all things not to do. In fact, it contains all that has happened and all that is bound to happen.

Those who have this book in their hearts, speak to their hearts, and they speak to each other through the book in their hearts. That book contains all the orders of God, which these chosen ones know in full.

O Soul, deputy of God in the universe of the human being, if you are charged to guide and rule the human realm, know that the Scribe is assigned by your Lord to the rank of your speaker. It is he who has been granted the power of oratory. When he speaks for you and of you, he does not do it on his own. He is created to be your dependent. Anyone who respects him and loves him, enters into his service and obeys him, therefore belongs to you.

Remember that he acts and speaks in your name, assumes your nature and your character. Appreciate that;

then do everything that is necessary to make your Scribe feel your appreciation, so that he loves you and is attached to you. Otherwise he can cause the worst disharmony and mischief in your kingdom.

Your prime minister, Intellect, whose sole objective is that order and peace should reign in your kingdom, is also in need of the Scribe. For your decrees, written by your Scribe, are made known far and wide in your realm by his efforts, not yours. You must surely see to it that your orders are understood in your immediate environment. If there is discord around you, it will spread to all your realm. Only Intellect, your prime minister, is able to prevent the possibility of such intrigue and sedition and the loss of control resulting from it, because the Lord has entrusted to Intellect the knowledge of immorality and evil dispositions and the power to fight them. That power comes from the fear of God. Your Lord and theirs has confirmed the position of both your Prime Minister and your Scribe as your helpers. Therefore take care of them.

If you care for them, you will see the signs of your Lord, who addresses you:

"O My governor, whom I sent to rule the realm of the human being in My name, in whom I have placed the sacred secret of My rules, and whom I have crowned with My own identity and essence—still you are in doubt and hesitant. You wish to see Me to be sure, although I have not willed that to happen. Now I will show Myself!

"I have raised the curtains, and torn them into such pieces that they can never be replaced. I have lifted them up into the invisible realm. Now you are a witness of My existence. You have known the veils, and you have seen what was behind them. So prostrate in front of Me, and

know. Read what I have assigned to be written: what will happen to everyone; which deeds will receive My response. There are no words nor sound in this revelation, shown to you in a dream.

"Peace be upon you and upon the ones who are with you, the ones who will never leave you; and all the blessings of all existence; and all love and compassion; and peace be upon those who see."

Your Lord orders His angels, who are in the person of your Scribe, to descend to the heart of His deputy in the human realm. And He indicates to him that He will find you in one of three possible states: either you are with your Lord; or with your ego; or together with your enemy, Satan.

If you are with your Lord, your Scribe is ordered not to even show you the words of your Lord, for the Lord Himself is already your guide. Your heart is in His hand; He will turn it whichever way He wills. Your Scribe has been given the best of character and behavior by the One who sent him, and he was taught not to show off his origins. In fact, if he finds you with your Lord, you will never see him; you will only know of him, by his name and by his rank. Yet you will also know that he is your defense against the desires of your ego and against the temptations of the Devil.

If, instead of being with your Lord, you are under the influence of your ego, your Scribe has been ordered to come to you in secret, without the knowledge of your ego. He will advise you to act upon what you already know, and warn you of what your ego knows: that it will stand against you on the Day of Judgment, when every minute of your life spent under its influence will be a hostile witness.

Beware, avoid not only what is forbidden and what

is disliked by God, but also that which is merely tolerated by Him. Even in lawful acts, such as eating, drinking, and sleeping, you must be more careful than anyone else. Abstain from excess, and begin each act by remembering your Lord. Act only in His name. Do what has been made obligatory for you, so that you will appear in front of Him unblemished and pure. When you show neither enjoyment, nor desire, nor even need of the things which have been made lawful to you, then your Lord will know that your goal is not the sustenance, but the Sustainer. God Most High says:

And He it is that feedeth what is not fed.

(An'am, 14)

When, remembering your Lord, you do that which has been made lawful to you, remember that the purpose of eating is to gain enough strength to worship Him and to fight in defense of His religion and of the laws which He has ordained for the good of the human being. Sleep is for the rest necessary to function in His name. Lawful sexual relationship is for the conception of an obedient and pure child who will walk in the way of the Lord. Seeing is for taking lessons, for distinguishing right from wrong, for following the right path and showing it to others, and for helping those in need. These are divine signs are around you, which correspond to what you have in your heart.

If you are found under the influence of your ego, your Scribe is instructed to remind you that you might very well follow the desires of your flesh, enjoy all and everything that this world offers you, and neglect to ask any favors from your Lord for the hereafter. If you are bound for

this world, then it will be your lord. If you are meant to be with your Lord, you will oppose the world.

While attached to this world, you may still be in one of the three states: you may be worshipping your Lord, or you may be with yourself, or you may be in the company of the Devil.

If you are sitting in vain prayer, the Scribe is instructed to prevent you from it, for you are spending your time for nothing. Lifting the veil of the useless pretense of contemplation, he will push you back to your work in the world.

If you are found with yourself, the Scribe is instructed to wait. When the ego goes to sleep in heedlessness and dreams an imaginary life, then the Scribe calls for the help of your Lord. Perchance He will show you the truth.

If you are found in the company of Satan, the Scribe is instructed to come between the two of you. He will seek your sympathy and friendship, so as to help you defend yourself against the Devil. In spite of being your dependent, in his function of defender he will appear to you as your master. He will persist, without showing hesitancy or weakness, because your Lord knows that you will finally return to Him.

If you are under the command of the enemy of humankind, then the Scribe is instructed to test you. He will encourage you to worship others than the Lord, to be engulfed by infidelity, attributing partners to God; to insult that which is sacred; to exalt lust, adultery, envy, violation of the rights of others. If he finds you hesitant to do one evil deed, He will encourage you to another.

In that state, you will find yourself again in one of the three possibilities: either you will still feel a connec-

tion with your Lord, or you will be alone with yourself, or you will be under the influence of your evil-commanding ego.

If you still feel a connection, the Scribe is instructed to ask you to identify yourself: who you are; what your name is; in whose service you are, while you are pretending to be with your Lord. He is instructed to throw you out of the kingdom of imagination that your Lord has given to you, so that you will see the difference between your pretense of being with Him and the state of those who are truly with Him, of whom He is jealous, and whom He protects from such conditions as the one in which you find yourself. But if, having been cast out of your imaginary state, you find any of your Lord's own attributes or traces of His divine actions in you, it will mean that you have repented. Then all the faults you have committed will be added to the mischief of the Devil, who will be kept in hellfire for eternity.

If you find yourself alone with yourself, separate from your Lord, setting yourself up as a partner to your Lord, then you are indeed a slave of the Devil, and the wrath of your Lord is upon both of you. Then the Scribe is charged to fight you both. If he wins, what will be left victorious is your Lord. If you win, you will be further strengthened in your blasphemy, and your Lord will brand your forehead and give you to Satan as his property. If your heart wishes for what Satan offers you, you will receive nothing from him. You will be left far from your Lord. And you will suffer, in addition, the pain of avenging yourself upon yourself.

If you find yourself under the influence of your evil-commanding ego, the Scribe is ordered to place in front of you all the desires of your flesh and more; and he is

ordered to increase your ambition for, and your designs upon, the pleasures of this world—a hunger that can never be satisfied. But you will be a most devout slave to your ego, and it will tear you to pieces.

One thing you must know: in all of this, whether you succeed or fail, whether, in his function as your Scribe, he is victorious over these states which may plague you or not—he is acting only in the name of your Lord. Both success and failure are from your Lord, for He is the All-Knowing and the All-Powerful.

All these are signs of your Lord, which enter with great force into one's being and settle in the heart. All of this is written. Your Scribe, whose hand is in the hand of Allah, knows it best, for the Lord accedes to what he requests, and he is made to know the state of things in your realm. So value him, and do not underestimate him in any way, because all divine words are in his hand, and what he asks for is granted.

Since the beginning of time, all that might happen, all change that might occur in the realm of the human being, and the very security of the deputy of Allah while ruling his realm, has been in the hand of the Scribe. Therefore hold fast to that hand, and place generous gifts in that hand, for generosity and gifts seal friendship and prevent hostility, jealousy, rancor, and revenge.

CHAPTER 10

ON THE METHOD OF COLLECTING TAXES AND CHOOSING THE ONE TO COLLECT THEM

O generous master charged to rule the human realm! Know that the power entrusted to you is protected by your Lord. The Lord has created beings in different levels. Some are over others, and some under. Some are destined to be leaders and others, followers; some to be masters and others, their servants. But on the Day of Judgment those destined to rule will be asked if they have ruled in justice, and those who have been ruled will be called as witnesses. Those who rule are warned by God:

Pursue not that of which thou hast no knowledge: for every act of hearing, or of seeing, or of [feeling in] the heart will be inquired into (on the day of reckoning).

(Bani Isra'il, 6)

and:

On the day when their tongues, their hands, and their feet will bear witness against them as to their actions.

(Nur, 24)

and:

At length, when they reach the [fire], their

hearing, their sight, and their skins will bear witness against them as to all their deeds.

(Fusilat, 20)

and:

Ye did not seek to hide yourselves, lest your hearing, your sight, and your skins should bear witness against you.

(Fusilat, 22)

The Lord in His Holy Book warns against injustice done to others on many other occasions.

Your eyes, ears, tongue, hands, belly, feet, and sexual organs are your entrusted workers and helpers, guardians of your treasures. At the head of these workers are the senses. It is they that guide and control them. Yet there is someone over the senses too, who directs and controls them: that director is Conception.

The director who is Conception is not able to differentiate right from wrong. For this purpose he has someone over him—which is Thinking. Thinking, in turn, is under the command of Intellect. Intellect is the highest authority in your government, your prime minister. And you, God's deputy, are above all of them and have the supreme authority and responsibility. That is why you are called the Sacred Soul.

O entrusted master, you must understand that you cannot do all you are expected to do by yourself. It is impossible. Your Lord often commands you to do many things at once. To gather together all that He has asked you to gather, you need the help of totally trustworthy workers of good will. They will be charged to collect the taxes

which are due on every member of your realm in a proper and just way, and to place this wealth in the treasuries of your kingdom—for a kingdom will not last without rich treasuries. To gather this capital is only possible through collecting taxes. What is expected of you by the members of your country is to be reasonable and just in the collection of taxes, not only for the length of your reign, but also to be an example for the future.

The helper you need to collect capital for the safety and governing of your kingdom has to be knowledgeable in the calculation of what is needed, as well as in what it is possible to collect. He must know this in detail, so that he will not ask any member of your kingdom for dues which he cannot afford and is unable to give.

All you need is one such capable helper. To use many will only result in conflict and disagreement among your workers. For it is possible that each tax collector may wish to do better than the other, in order to please you and to gain your favors. Then they will try to collect, by force, more than people can afford—thus causing poverty among your people and weakness in your kingdom. Any wealth gathered unjustly and by violence will bring no profit. It will be like trying to collect water in a hole in the sand.

The Messenger of God, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, said, "A fertile field is the one which does not hide in it what is going to grow upon it."

He also said, "Whoever makes a tyranny of my religion, and whoever in the future will do the same, will be defeated by that religion."

And God Most High, says:

Make not thy hand tied [like a niggard's] to thy

neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach
[like a spendthrift].

Thus, fast and break your fast; worship your Lord, then sleep to rest; be at peace, for your Lord has chosen a helper for you, who will collect your taxes and fill your treasuries and protect you from error. As long as he is with you, none of your good deeds will be lost. They will be safely kept. Your Lord has signified him for you as the best among those who intend to right the wrong, who are heedful of what is present and who preview the future. Make that one your collector of taxes. You will be satisfied with his services.

That collector and keeper of the dues for your Lord (which are your good deeds) is Knowledge. His helpers are persistence, economy, equity, courage, and conscience. When they serve you, the finances of your kingdom will be administered in justice, and you will find prosperity and security in the future. They will know what to expect from the maleficent influences among some of the members of your kingdom, and take precaution. They will know what each member owes and is able to give without causing him hardship, so both the one who pays his obligation and the one who receives will be content.

Now that you know the way of gathering in your treasuries what is due to your Lord and how to choose your helpers, trust in Knowledge as your collector of taxes—and praise your Lord who has given him to you as your helper.

CHAPTER 11

ON SEEKING THE WAY TO OFFER THE LORD THAT WHICH IS DUE FROM HIS DEPUTY

O generous master, deputy of God, know that what is made known to you in this book is not intended for your theoretical education, nor to teach you what to do. It is a warning about your actions.

Your Lord is the lord of all lords, the master of all masters, the king of the universe. All else is nothing, or is in the process of becoming nothing, in comparison to Him. He is the owner of everything; He has no beginning and no end. All that is visible and invisible is in His knowledge. All existences, old and new—their beginning and their end, what is above them and under them, came to be only through Him. Everything is from Him and returns to Him, and whatever is from Him is for Him alone.

All your actions—your deeds both known and unknown to you—are from Him. Only He sees and knows all of them. Every wrong act that comes through you vexes Him and pains Him, and he feels aversion to it. He has created no one better than you to know what is right and what is wrong. You are His best creation, because He acts through you. He does not wish to lose you. He has created you as a sensible and obedient being.

O blessed deputy, take heed that you offer to your Lord what you are collecting for yourself, even though your impressions are collected by your senses and must be evaluated by your heart. Take care how they reach you.

You collect from your environment what you sense

and feel worthy to be collected. Your perception and your conception are the chiefs of your senses, who collect this wealth. They are also the guardians who keep it safe. The experiences collected are classified according to their kind and value and brought to the guardians to be put in the treasury of the mind.

Once it is in the treasury of the mind, the name of this wealth changes from experience to memory. It is kept there in the treasury to be dispensed by a higher authority, Remembrance. But the wealth is kept in two separate places: there is that which is committed to memory to be kept, and that which is to be remembered and dispensed. When the memory which is to be dispensed is called for, it is given to the arbitration of Thought. There it tells what it knows and so directs Thinking, often saving it from dangers, distinguishing truth from lies. It also informs the thought process about the ability and quality of the forces working under it.

Experiences gathered by the senses might also be erroneous, counterfeit. These too might be deposited in memory, remembered, and brought back to thought. If Thought tests a thing anew with the senses and gets the proper response, that means there is no mistake in it. Then it can take that sensation as being true and good, and present it to its master, Intellect. Thought presents the new experience—reinforced with the memory, remembered in all detail and clarity—to its master, Intellect, saying: Here is what the ear heard, here is what the eye saw, here is what the tongue said. The ears, the eyes, the tongue are its helpers. If Intellect accepts this explanation, then that experience enters into the treasury of undeniable truths.

Next Intellect, the prime minister of the kingdom of

the human being, takes this treasury to the Sacred Soul, the master of the realm, and places it in front of him, saying: Here is the wealth, the valuable product of the servants of your realm.

Without wasting a moment, the soul picks up the treasure and flies to the presence of its Lord, then throws itself down in prostration at His door. As the door opens, the soul swoons in awe at the manifestation of the Lord, and drops the treasures of good deeds on the ground.

The Lord asks, "Why have you come to Us?"

The Sacred Soul responds, "O my Lord, I have come to present You with the deeds of the human realm to which you have assigned me as Your deputy. You have asked me to collect what is due to You from them. I have brought You all that has been collected from them and brought to me."

Then the Lord says: "Take this deputy and bring him to what I have written before I created him. Bring him to the Holy Qur'an, and compare his actions with what is written in it. Tie them together until he has read it all, word by word. Release him only when he has reached the height of it."

All this happens under the Lotus Tree in the seventh heaven, above all the other heavens.

If, in that treasure offered to the Lord by the soul, there is a deed which is not in harmony with the Lord's intention in the creation of the human being, a tyranny done to one's self or to others, then the gates of Heaven will not open for the soul to pass. When he reaches the skies of this world he will be rejected. He will be thrown back under the seven levels of earth into Hell, weighed down by the weight of the inhumanity which he offered as his deeds to his Lord.

God says:

Verily, the record of the righteous is [raised with him] in the highest Paradise.

(*Tatfif*, 18)

and:

Nay, surely the record of the wicked is [thrown with him] in Hell.

(*Tatfif*, 7)

God Most High addresses the soul in the seventh heaven: "O my servant, as a reward for what you have brought for Me I have made this lofty place lawful to you. Look at the ones who are below you to appreciate your state." And the soul looks below it and realizes the favors of its Lord. Then it is left alone with those favors. When the Lord sees that the soul is content with His favors and is not desiring Him, He hides Himself from it. If it were not so, we would have been able to see Him.

The Lord has created a cause for every secret, and this He keeps for Himself. God says:

[Jesus is] His word, which He bestowed upon Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Him.

(*Nisa'*, 170)

and:

To Him mount up all words of purity. It is He who exalts each deed of righteousness.

(*Fatir*, 10)

When deeds are presented to the soul and their identity transformed into something acceptable to it, the soul feels an affinity with them. Now these deeds appear to the soul to be on its level. When the Lord sees this state of affairs, He dresses the deeds in two fine garments, one upon the other. He sets them in their proper niches, but takes their true qualities and identity from under the fancy clothes. He locks them up in the treasury of His secrets, and the soul is left with only the exterior beauty of the good deeds. Their spirit is gone. That is why there is a saying: "Give the due of your deeds," meaning, do not give overdue value to your deeds. That is how the essence of things gets lost while they still appear as intact as before.

What is evident and what is hidden; living in accordance with religious law and living in accordance with truth; the action of hands and the action of hearts—all these may seem to be separate things. Yet their result may be the same, just as true submission and simple obedience may both make us do the same thing.

Practical righteous acts, which are kept in the treasury of the mind, are other than the select acts meant for celestial realms. Therefore, master of the human realm, choose deeds that are greater than this world. Choose deeds that will pierce the heavens above you. When you seek knowledge, seek not only the knowledge which changes, which leaves and is replaced. Seek divine knowledge, which is certain and pure. God's words are like the most perfect and pure pearls. All praise is due to Him.

CHAPTER 12

ON MISSIONS SENT TO APPEASE THE UPHEAVALS IN SOME REGIONS OF THE KINGDOM

Let it be known that divine wisdom is only given to leaders who have rejected the temptations of intellect. If a king decides to send a mission to negotiate with an enemy, his ambassadors must have the following qualities. They must be trustworthy, upright, faithful, religious, far-sighted, valorous, generous, eloquent, convincing, and have other positive qualities related to these. Ambassadors are the representatives of whoever sends them, and it is presumed that the qualities of the one who sends them are similar to their own. If the one who receives them is not convinced of the superior character of the one who sent them, he will be indifferent to their demands. Worse still, if the mission consists of men with a character contrary to these attributes, the enemy will consider the one who sent them as someone who is treacherous, heinous, lying, selfish, and unready to negotiate anything that could be favorable to the opposition.

Therefore, O deputy of God, when you send a mission to subdue your greatest enemy, the evil-commanding ego, who tries to appear in his own state like an obedient vassal to you, let your ambassadors consist of your representatives called honor, sincerity, understanding, perseverance, precaution, good intention, patience, courage, experience, consideration, fear of God, and justice. Every leader who sends a mission consisting of these ambassadors certainly will obtain peace, prosperity, and greatness.

Even the worst enemies, egotism and egoism, will submit to them. Perhaps, though they were your enemies, they may even convert to being your friends. Then the precautions which you have taken to neutralize them will suffice to defeat them without fighting.

And if your enemy—who revolted against you and created mischief in the kingdom that your Lord entrusted to you to defend—sends you a mission, receive them well. Do not treat them harshly. In their negotiations, if they appear to be disloyal to the one who sent them, do not look upon them as traitors. Attribute it to their inexperience and lack of knowledge of politics and diplomacy. If they represent openly the feelings of tyranny, vengeance, treachery, greed, niggardliness, arrogance, ignorance, immorality, cursing, cowardice, and so forth, do not reject them with hatred, nor attack them with words and acts resembling theirs. Test them with diplomatic kindness. It is only when you do not address them in their own style, but in a different mode, that you may attract their attention and start negotiations. In your negotiations, use your prime minister, Intellect, as your translator.

If attached to the mission of the enemy there is an ambassador named Ambition, listen to him. Although he represents your enemy, he is the most trustworthy among them. What he says will be clear and true. He will transmit the message of your enemy thus: "Our lord the ego, whom we are obligated to obey, informs you to surrender and come under our rule, or else we will wage war against you. And his condition for surrender is that you will oppose all the ordinances of your religion and take away from the citizens of your kingdom all that they possess, up to what they need to sustain themselves, and hold everything in your hands."

Your response to him should begin, "O ambassador whose words we value, and whose rank and station are high in our eyes!" The ambassador will be responsive to this introduction, because he has never heard such words from his lord, the ego. Then you will address him and say, "O ambassador, listen to what I say, and reason and be fair. Do you know God? Is He not your Lord and ours?"

He will admit that the One Lord is their Lord also.

Then ask him: "Will you not, as we will, migrate to another world from this world?" And he will also admit that.

Then ask him if this eternal trip is going to be back to our One Lord, or to somewhere else. He will again admit that we will all return to God.

Then ask him, "When we return to God, leaving this life, how will He treat the ones who revolt against Him and who act against His religious laws?" He will have to answer that God will punish those with pain and perdition.

Then ask him, "How will God treat the ones who obey Him?" He will have to answer, "With peace and felicity."

Then ask him, "Is there anyone more powerful and richer than God?" He will have to answer: "Nay."

Then tell him: "O ambassador of ego, greedy Ambition, go and tell your lord the evil-commanding ego: 'I do not care about things which do not please God.' I know that you have a great appetite for owning things, but nothing will come to you except what God has destined for you. What is Ambition for?" The ambassador will be speechless.

Then tell him: "O Ambition, the truth is true for both you and me. Reality is real for both you and me. So

let us spend what is really given to us for God's sake, and in His way, to gain His pleasure. What is given to us in this world is not much good for any of us, and it is temporary. What we hope for from the hereafter is better for us, and greater. O Ambition, I know you are devoted to this world. In spite of all your efforts, don't you feel that something is missing?"

And he will answer you, "Indeed." And he will abandon the path by which he came, and leave you taking the path of knowledge.

Hold on to your religion. Its laws are the laws with which you rule your realm. That is your strength, and that is what keeps the evil-commanding ego in check. You may have similar arguments, worded differently according to their negative convictions, for each of the enemy ambassadors—the treacherous one, the lying one, and the spreader of mischief. But you will be able to make all of them submit to your Lord, and make them Muslims. For Islam—submission to the greater will of the Truth, to the One who created us and created all that His creation needed—is the origin of all and everything. And everything returns to its origin.

Yet your own effort to send your mission to your enemy may not be successful, because all the premises and goals of their argument will be opposed to what the evil-commanding ego demands, and he is apt to reject it. So they will return to you empty-handed. This is the policy and the tactics to be followed in negotiations with enemy ambassadors: it suffices to talk to only one of them, because their demands will all be the same.

CHAPTER 13

ON THE ARMED FORCES IN DEFENSE OF THE KINGDOM OF THE HUMAN BEING, ITS GENERALS, THEIR CHARACTER AND STRATEGY

The army of the kingdom of the human being is the central column which holds the balance of justice. Know that your realm is a home, and a home sits on the four sides of its foundation. That home is you. Its foundation is your attributes and character.

Your foundation is the guarantee of your sovereignty. Its four supports, made of your attributes, are like four generals who command an army to protect your homeland. Watch them very carefully, for your security depends on them.

Each of the four sides of the foundation supports a wall; each of the four generals commands an army. These four armies each have two duties to perform.

Two is the purpose and origin of Four and what generates from Four, and is what connects the numbers generating from Four. It continues ad infinitum. The numbers increase from One to Ten. No other sequence ends in Ten except the number Four, because Four is the reality, the essence, of Ten.

Four is the basis; within it, there is Three. When we add Three to Four, it equals Seven. Within the Four there is also Two. When we add Two to Seven, it equals Nine.

What is left after the Two is One. When we add the One to Nine, it equals Ten. These are the basic numbers. No other numbers add up to Ten except Four plus Three plus Two plus One, which in turn equals Four. So the Ten is within the Four.

We chose the number Four because it contains a divine secret. It is a number of power and weight. That power and weight are under the command of our Lord. The Messenger of God says "The heavens are held by eight supports, but in our time it is four."

And God says:

And eight [angels] will that day bear the throne
of thy Lord above them.

(Haqqa, 17)

"That day," in this verse, is the day of the hereafter. But the deputy of God, the human being, has four principal elements in this world of matter, the same four elements from which the whole universe is made—earth and water, air and fire. These four principal elements are the gate to Forty. It is such a wide gate that, if we try to describe it, we will far exceed our intention in this book.

We are also ordered to live within four dimensions. All influences which may cause mischief in our life and being come from those four directions: from our front and our back, our right and our left. In the Holy Qur'an Satan addresses God and says:

Then will I assault them from before them and
behind them and from their right and their left.

(A'raf, 16)

No other directions from which evil influences may come are mentioned except these four, yet there are two other dimensions: above us and below us. That which is under us always pulls us to it, and that which is above us belongs to our Lord; it is where He ascends and descends. Do not attempt to reach this, for it is the realm of destiny where we are forbidden to penetrate.

O generous deputy of God in the human realm, watch those four directions from which harm can reach you. Place your four armies, with their four generals, to defend these passages, so that they may protect your realm, your life, and your peace. Your enemies are treacherous and cruel, but they are not brave. They can only enter into your realm when these four paths are undefended.

Your strategy for battle should be this: Put the love and fear of God on your right flank; put your mercy on your left flank; hold knowledge between your two hands in front of you; use intelligence to protect your back.

If the enemy attacks from your right flank, it will be met by the army of your general whose name is Fear of God. You have placed him on your right, for Paradise is in that direction, while your left is the direction of Hell. If your enemy attacks from your right to cut the route to Paradise, his strongest forces will be lust and the love of this world. Often they infiltrate through your ranks as friends. Only the fear of God will be able to repel them; any other force will be fooled by them. Thus, keep the love and fear of God on your right, defending the path to Paradise. Divine wisdom commands that everything must be in its proper place.

If the enemy attacks you from the left, he uses his forces of hopelessness, despair, hatred, spite, and doubt.

Mercy is your strength to repel them. Kindness, forgiveness, compassion will subdue and humiliate them.

If your enemy attacks you from the front, he will deploy his forces of praise, self-aggrandizement, and temptation to arrogance. Arrogance is for the foolish and ignorant; thus the force that will stop it is knowledge, which you hold in between your two hands.

If your enemy attacks you from behind, his forces will be insidious, perverse imaginations to crush you and defeat you, replacing reality with dreams. Only your armies of intelligence and heedfulness will be able to defeat them. Only these will detect this attack, for it will come under the smoke and camouflage of imagination, which imitates reality, enhanced.

That is how you can defend your realm, which is entrusted to you by your Lord. If you wish to increase your security, you may increase your armies up to ten, but never more than ten—for that is the limit, according to the articles of faith, for defending the truth against all defect. When you increase your armies from four to ten, then you will be able to defend your front, your back, your right, your left; what is under, what was before, and what will be after both the whole and the parts of the whole. Thus, all the routes to salvation will be kept open for you, and your realm will be safe from all defect. It will be with your Lord as it is from Him—and you will find security, peace, and happiness.

CHAPTER 14

ON THE PREPARATION AND STRATEGY FOR THE BATTLE AGAINST THE ENEMY

O deputy of God, the first consideration in battle is the defense of the banner of honor which has been bestowed upon you—the honor of ruling in the name of your Lord. This must be set in the safest of places, for it must be defended above everything else. Therefore you must establish for yourself a headquarters which will be secure, yet from which, at the same time, you can control your armies.

This must be under the feet of your Lord, at the Footstool of God. That is the castle where divine laws are generated. That is where the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, are decided upon. That is the place set highest in the creation, having the strongest defenses. Stay there, and do not ever throw yourself into the midst of battle, for if anything happens to you, your armies will be scattered and your realm will fall into the hands of the enemy.

The best strategy is to stay safely in your command post and set your generals and your armies to defend your four flanks. For if any or all of your armies should fall before your enemies in the four directions, you will still be secure. And as long as you exist, your country will exist. Some of your defenses may be able to retreat towards the center, and you may be able to reinforce them and continue the battle. If a branch should fall from a tree, the tree will still be safe, and will be able to grow

another branch to replace the fallen one.^b But if the trunk is cut, the tree dies.

The purpose of the battle is the continuation of life. The sap of the tree, which permits the growing of another branch to replace the severed one, is justice. If, in anything that is alive, justice disappears, it will immediately be replaced by tyranny. And tyranny is the instrument of death.

The country over which you rule is the material existence of the human being, his body. The king of that realm is the soul. If the soul leaves the body, the body is dead—but if a part of the body is hurt, the soul will still remain in it. He is the one who seeks the cure. Therefore, above all, you must protect yourself. Even if you see them close to you, do not let them see you.

If all your armies retreat to the center to wage a final battle, gather them all upon the shores of the sea. Then, with the staff of Faith in your hand, touch the waters of knowledge. The ocean of knowledge will part. Take your armies into the breach opened for you.

Knowledge is the gate of security, the gate of guidance. Satan also seeks this gate. He will follow you into the breach—but when he comes to the middle of it, the ocean of knowledge will close upon him and upon his armies.

Some men of knowledge confess and say, "Although we sought knowledge for others' sake, God has led us only to Himself by it." God says:

And the best of planners is God.
(*Al-i 'Imran*, 54)

Thus it is in the story of Moses and Pharaoh. When

the armies of Pharaoh followed Moses and his people in their exodus from Egypt, God opened a path in the Red Sea. And after the sons of Israel passed through, the sea closed over the army of Pharaoh.

The agents of your enemy may tempt you to seek knowledge in order to impress others, to place yourself above them, and to make you a master whom others will need and respect. Let that not diminish your appetite for knowledge. Hurry to learn that which you do not know. Haste is what Satan and your evil-commanding ego love—but that is the haste of the seeker who does not know where he is going. They do not know that your haste is to find truth. What the Devil, in his ignorance, hopes, is that you will drown in the ocean of knowledge—as Pharaoh hoped, while he was rushing to destroy.

The proof of the Devil's ignorance given in the Holy Qur'an is in his response to God, for he disobeyed Him when asked to prostrate in front of the newly created Adam:

He said: I am better than he. Thou didst create me from fire and him from clay.
(*A'raf*, 11)

He did not know that God had taught Adam all His names.

There will be other good acts which your enemies may tempt you to undertake with bad intentions, hoping that they will thus turn against you. They do not know your intention, which is guided by your knowledge and judgment. So do not refuse everything your enemy demands.

The one who works hard even without conviction is always better than a trusted friend who is lazy and does nothing.

The one who works, even if he does not have his heart in it, will have a glimpse of divine light that will enlighten his heart. That light will blind those deeds that he did without considering their results, without judging whether they were wrong or right. It will guide him on the path of salvation. Thus the enemy will himself fall into the trap which he has set for you.

So in your battle against the Devil and your evil-commanding ego, stay safely in that high place, close to God, at the center of your realm. That castle is the heart. It casts fear upon your enemies to know that you are there, because they also know they cannot reach you there. Their only hope is to get you out of it, into the open, where they can trap you; and their principal tactic is to push you to haste. If you are careful, you will not fall into that error. For you can see where the enemy is, from that high tower; you can observe his defenses.

CHAPTER 15

ON SECRET CODES AND WARNINGS OF DANGERS IN THE OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE ENEMY

Know that, among the numbers known to man, the numbers mentioned in the Holy Qur'an and in Islamic teaching hold a divinely-kept secret. If it is sought, it will enlighten the path to follow.

All creation is created from Two to Twelve. Twelve is the final degree of all numbers.

There are four stages in counting: Ones, Tens, Hundreds, and Thousands. Four is the perfect number. Twelve is the last number. Whatever aspect of the human realm is considered, you will find that it is composed of Twelve. Twelve is the unification of the four creative numbers and the three original numbers.

The four creative numbers represent being, reason, man, and his station. These four creative elements are the preoccupation of life. From this Four, many a knowledge generates. From these many knowledges, many seek—and some find—unity.

If we unite the number One, through the intermediary of the word “and,” with another One similar to it—“One ‘and’ One”—the number Two will appear. The number One is not counted as a number, yet all numbers generate from it. When One disappears, all else disappears.

When One is added to Two, it becomes Three. When One is added to Three, it becomes Four. If we keep

counting, adding One to the resulting numbers, we will reach a Thousand, and when we subtract a Thousand from a Thousand, the Thousand disappears.

Thus, the beginning of preemptive numbers is Two. The first of the individual numbers is Three. Two is the origin of, and is similar to, all preemptive numbers. Three is the origin of all individual numbers, both for that which is less than it and for that which is more than it.

Even numbers are higher than and ahead of odd numbers. This is natural and impossible to be otherwise.

It is impossible that Four be before Three or that Five be before Four. Thus, if you detect a number which is within and under the control of an even or an odd number, the one which contains the odd number will defeat the one which contains the even number. But the one which comes before and after that number, if it contains an even number, will defeat the one which contains the odd number.

It is lawful for man to fight against his personal evil, the ego, and against evil influences outside of him which aim to destroy him. This fight becomes necessary when there is rebellion against the decrees of the Creator within or without one's self. It must be done, not with violence, but in ways that have been made permissible by God. If one fights against rebellion within one's self, then the even will have to defeat the odd. If one is fighting against the evil forces around one's self, the odd will have to defeat the even. If there is a rebellion within the enemy of the outside after it has been defeated, then the even must defeat the odd.

There are two kinds of unity. One is the absolute oneness of all and everything. The other is personal unity and oneness. Absolute oneness applies to everyone, even those who are against Islam, who think of it as a numerical

oneness, based upon material numbers with no spiritual bearing, despite its truth. Personal oneness is the unity and oneness of the messengers of God, of the prophets Muhammad and Moses, may God's peace and blessings be upon both of them. It is also the goal of all men of wisdom and knowledge and of their people: an attempt at unity and oneness to be created from the apparent multiplicity in man.

Absolute oneness has the power to defeat everything false, everywhere, at all times. Beware that your enemy not use this power against you before you can use it against him.

Personal oneness does not guarantee victory at all times. In some circumstances it may save you; in some circumstances it may not be able to defend you. Therefore, you must find the right circumstances, where it will help you to be victorious—and then, depend upon it. And if it fails you, then you must seek your salvation in the absolute oneness.

All this is secrets from among the divine secrets. Each thing that is said depends upon and relates to the other. Each has many ramifications and can only be understood if one knows it in detail. A sign suffices for those who know.

CHAPTER 16

ON THE REGULATION AND PREPARATION OF THE SPIRITUAL DIET, ACCORDING TO THE DIFFERENT SEASONS, FOR THE GROWTH OF THE DEPUTY OF GOD

Know that one's diet is to be regulated in accordance with the causes and conditions created by God. A created being needs food for its existence and survival, and there are clear rules set by the Creator for its sustenance. The difference between the human being and the rest of creation is that the human is the ultimate consumer. The rest of creation is made to be used by it.

That which we consume is regulated according to different times of the year and different seasons. The warmth and humidity in the body, which regulates the natural conditions for life, is influenced by the intake of food. The Lord permits man to eat as long as He permits him to live, and people see and feel and behave in accordance with, and are conditioned by the food they eat and that they grow around them.

This is such a clear situation that it does not even need to be discussed.

People who seek to find themselves in order to better themselves do not follow a path in which opposites clash. They are centered in their hearts. Now I ask them: "You wish to better yourself, but do you know what you want, and how you wish to be?"

Then know that the months of Spring are warm and

humid. They correspond to the natural state of the living organism. The body has a tendency to motion—to move, to travel, leaving pain and trouble behind. You see it all around you, in plants and in animals—all living things are in motion. So too, the vegetable and animal souls which exist in every human being are agitated. They tremble, they gyrate. The seeker who ignores his natural instincts is gravely mistaken.

O deputy of God, to rule the kingdom of the human being, know that God is the Lord. He bestows a state upon the time and the place and that which dwells in them, giving it as their nature, which they obey and with which abide. So when you see the people of your realm in the same state, accept it. Order your prime minister, Intellect, and his servants of Intellect, and your forces of Memory, to gather all that they can from that nature which corresponds to the precepts of your faith. For God says:

In this is a warning for such as have eyes to see.
(*Al-i 'Imran*, 213)

and:

But when we pour down rain on the earth, it is stirred to life, it swells, and it puts forth every kind.

(*Hajj*, 5)

and:

It grows till the earth is clad with its golden ornament and is decked out in beauty.

(*Yunus*, 24)

The Lord has made the season of Spring to bring the earth to life and to make each thing in it move, to seek and find and to become what is its due among that which the Lord of all has kept in store. So gather from this plenty all except that which poisons and constricts your heart.

There is no struggle or difficulty in this divine transaction between man and the Sustainer. Let your people do the same. You may worry that they may not be able to differentiate the real from the false, but let them go out to nature and wander around the green fields and along the clear rivers, smelling the flowers in the mountains and in the forest, and enjoy themselves. Thus, with your care and beneficence to them, you will profit from their joy and experience. And you will be loved and esteemed by them as if you yourself were wandering in Spring on the mountains and in the valleys where clear rivers flow, gathering flowers.

All this will remind you of Paradise and of what your Lord keeps in store for the ones whom He loves. The Spring is the season of Paradise, and Paradise is the home of the living. As it is wet and warm here, so is it in the climate of Paradise. When your people feel the same, it will encourage them and give them energy. Use that energy to lead them to work, but eliminate the difficulties in their work, so that their wish and hope for the eternal bliss and comfort of Paradise will increase. They will find signs of it in this world in the Spring.

Spring is analogous to youth in the life of man, but its end is not like its beginning.

The Summer season is warm and dry. It has the nature and character of fire. It is a season of contemplation, a time which overpowers and defeats man. It makes

one think that life is advancing and one will be old, for action is difficult for the old. The heat reminds one of the fire of Hell, and you will remember God who says:

When the blazing fire is kindled to fierce heat.
(*Takwir*, 12)

You will remember the Day of Reckoning, when the sun will descend low, brains will boil, men will drown in their sweat in utter thirst, and the sinners will be chased from the fountain by angels of wrath.

But all this may be the fiery food, a lesson and punishment for your evil-commanding ego, thus relieving you of his tyranny.

The Autumn is the season of cold and dryness, which is the nature of death, and it should remind you of death—the cause of death, the awe of death, the pain of death. And along with all that, think of this: will you be able, at the last moment, to remember and be with your Lord, or will you die heedless, separate from Him, caring for yourself alone, as you did all your life? Reflect upon how your enemies will rejoice when the angel of death tears your life away. Will the gates of Heaven open for you, or will you be rejected and sink to the lowest of the low?

While you are among the living, it is as if this world is pregnant with you. Your physical being in this life is as thin as the placenta which will be discarded as nothing and left behind when you are born to death. God says:

It is He who brought you forth from the wombs
of your mothers when ye know nothing.
(*Nahl*, 78)

At death, all that you know about this life will be left behind. So feed your heart with the divine knowledge of the Hereafter. Know that the promise of your Lord will certainly come true.

The fourth and last season of the year is Winter. It is cold and humid. It is the nature of Purgatory. The food your soul needs in this season is the contemplation of two states, one or the other of which is waiting for you. You will feel either the fear of being chained and dipped into fire among the tyrants of this world, or the yearning to be free, looking upon your place among the gardens of Paradise. You must measure the little time left to you, and decide whether to spend it in obedience to, or in revolt against, your Lord. You will not ever be able to relive your life. The case is like the plight of those who will reach Purgatory empty-handed and beg the Lord to return them to the world to do good deeds; they will be rejected. The regret of your past, and the desire to redo the things you have done wrong, is of no use. That is only fooling yourself. Yet you may still have time to balance your wrong by doing right, for God promises:

Unless he repents, believes, and works righteous deeds, for God will change the evil of such persons into good.
(*Furqan*, 70)

He also warns:

Of no effect is the repentance of those who continue to do evil, until death faces one of them, and he says, now I have repented indeed.
(*Nisa'*, 18)

Purgatory is like a continuation of this life, but in it you have no will of your own. Whatever may be done with you there will give you no benefit; what will count then is what you have brought with you. This should feed your thoughts in the Winter of your life.

Thought and action are two foods for the maintenance of this life. They should be consumed together. Thought will evaluate the results of an action. If an undertaking is favorable and in accordance with the wish of your Lord, act upon it with His permission and in His name. Then it will bring health and strength to your being.

O master of the human realm, save yourself and your kingdom. If you govern with justice and treat your subjects with gentleness, leading them on the straight path that your Lord has set out for you, then on the Day of Judgment they will bear witness in your favor, and the Divine Judge will accept their testimony. But if you lead yourself and those who depend on you to harm, corrupting their good intentions with your injustice and perversity, then on the Day of Reckoning every member of your kingdom will be a witness against you and you will not be able to defend yourself. God says:

That day shall We set a seal on their mouths,
but their hands will speak to Us and their feet
bear witness to all that they did.

(Ya Sin, 365)

You have been informed of the different foods offered to you by the different seasons. You must also be warned that each of the four seasons of the year has particular ailments and difficulties which you should try to

ward off. These ills will attack the body at different ages and stages of your life. Worse still, there are also spiritual ailments.

Actually, the foods offered to you at different seasons are preventatives and medications to protect you and cure you. They are effective only if you are able to see the symptoms and take your medication in time. If you learn the symptoms and causes of these ailments, and the times when they are apt to be epidemic, then you can eliminate the suffering and keep yourself in good health during your life in this world.

Knowledge is your principal food. That is what sustains your spiritual life, but not without putting into action what you have learned. You must acquire the knowledge corresponding to the specific seasons of your life. You must also act upon what you have learned at the proper times, exactly as you take medication when the doctor prescribes it to be taken. The diet and the medication suggested to you are meant to balance either that which is in excess, or that which is lacking in you. This is what has to be discovered.

Your Lord is the great doctor who knows the constitution of all His creations. If your doctor told you to take some tender meat and add almonds, saffron vinegar, and pepper, cook it on a slow fire and eat it at specific times and in good measure—if you did it, you would grow strong. And you would have carried out, yourself, an instruction given to you by someone you trusted. You would have mixed it yourself and cooked it yourself and eaten it yourself—and your own body, after taking what it needs, would have excreted the dregs of it.

What turns into curative life-force in you is the spirit that your Lord has entrusted to you; it will cause you

to live and be strong. Your actions are its instrument, although they are also the result of the strength thus received. And none other than your own being will reject the dregs of unfaithfulness—of imagining partners for your Lord, of arrogantly installing yourself as master—and throw them into the sewer of Hell.

The most bitter of medicines, perhaps, is what your Lord orders you to do: to wake up in the middle of the night to say your prayers; to take your ablution and wash yourself many times a day; to walk to mosques far away to participate in the congregational prayers; to fast; to pay alms. Honey tastes bitter to the one who is sick—but if you have faith in your Lord, if you trust in His promises and His rewards in the Hereafter, if you fear Him and love Him and wish to be with Him, the bitter will turn into sweet. For He says:

And those who strive in Our cause, We will certainly guide them to Our paths, for verily God is with those who do right.

(*Ankabut*, 69)

and:

So fear God, for it is God who teaches you.

(*Baqarah* 282)

It is certain that your sustenance is gained through your own actions. According to the Law, the best food is that which is obtained by your own efforts. Even eating it and digesting it is your own work—therefore, it is service. Thus if you gain your food heedfully and lawfully, prepare it, chew it, taste it, swallow it, digest it—you will serve the

One who created you and keeps you alive, and who placed your soul into you from His own soul. Thus you will help Him by receiving that which He has given you.

If somebody else chewed and ate your food, what possible good could ever come to you from it? Therefore you have to do it yourself.

Many heedless ones are unable to receive what is given to them, nor can they taste what nourishes them. For nourishment must be absorbed through one's own efforts and thankfulness. When the likes of these appear in front of their Lord on the Day of Reckoning, their actions and good deeds will not accompany them to witness in their favor. For you need at least two witnesses—good deeds, and thankfulness to the One who enabled you to do the deed.

Every living creature needs sustenance to exist. Your Lord has charged the Archangel Michael with the sustenance of all living beings. He guides them through their senses to the food which is destined for them, and even spreads life-sustaining strength in their being through their veins.

Your Lord has charged the Archangel Israfil to sustain the material bodies with their souls.

He has charged the Archangel Gabriel to feed the souls with intellect and knowledge.

The existence of every living being depends on a command of its Creator. That command of the Lord comes in the form of sustenance. It all comes from one source, and that source is the essence. Without it there is no life, neither for the body, nor for the mind, which feeds on the knowledge of it. The body and the mind care only for things which have shapes and forms, while the eternal

soul, which has no form and shape, wishes to stay only within itself. Its sustenance is divine knowledge. That is why the pure soul who was the Messenger of God, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, needed knowledge to sustain himself, and in the Holy Qur'an begged his Lord, saying:

O my Lord, increase me in knowledge.
(*Ta Ha*, 114)

The Prophet, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, said that he saw in a dream that his sustenance was brought to him as a cup of milk. When he drank from it, his satiation came out from the tips of his fingers, and he gave that milk to 'Umar to drink. His blessed Companions asked him how he interpreted that dream, and he said that the sustenance was knowledge. When he spoke with his Lord after his ascension through the heavens, his Lord told him that just as milk was sent to him in the dream, knowledge was going to be the sustenance of his people, too.

O deputy of God, to rule the realm of human beings, be with your Lord in His command. Do not count on the soul alone to obtain its own sustenance. You are responsible for it. Besides, the appetite of the soul for knowledge is insatiable. The Prophet of God, may His peace and blessings be upon him, said: "Two kinds of people are never satiated: the first are those who love this world, and the second are those who seek knowledge."

Know that the knowledge under your feet is not worth picking up. Seek the knowledge that God has bestowed upon the chosen few. That knowledge contains the mysteries of divine nature. Practical knowledge is satisfying, beautiful—but its value is no more than logic over

philosophy. The knowledge which you wish to seek is beyond the mind. Its light is all-encompassing, like a perfect mirror reflecting all that is. Practical knowledge is discoveries of already existing things. It enlarges your scope and brings you satisfaction and joy. But real joy is not in the knowledge of things, but in the truth of things.

It is hard work and a lot of pain to attain truth, and none who attain it imagine that they did it themselves. They do not stand upon it, sully it by stepping on it. It is an unsoiled mirror, pure, the mirror of the soul—the place where the Lord manifests Himself. It is not like what one discovers through one's evil-commanding ego. That is more like a blinding fog which prevents one from seeing the reality of things.

But the knowledge of truth, when it penetrates into the visible, material elements constituting the reality of things, quickens the evolution of the one who attains it. Although now he walks and sits and eats and sleeps with his Lord, remembering Him, totally conscious—this only shows his weakness, and that he cannot keep it. But if he devotes all his care and attention to living in peace and moderation, he may be able to hold on to the truth. Then he will be the master of the high state which he has attained because of it.

The knowledge of the truth of things, which is among the mysteries of divine nature, does not require the memory with which a human being is provided for the recording of his other experiences.

CHAPTER 17

ON THE SECRETS WHICH GOD HAS ENTRUSTED TO MAN

How should one proceed on the path to Truth, which is divided into five? O you whose hearts are yearning for secrets hidden from the eye: know that what has been said here does not contain anything that the writer has added from himself; nor does he seek any honor or benefit from what he says; nor claim that he has earned, merited, or deserved that which was given to him. He does not display anything from his own thoughts as proof of the knowledge contained in these writings, nor claim to have heard anything which he has not heard.

You must be told how these secrets, hidden deep inside you, sometimes surge into your consciousness, sometimes sink deep into your unconscious. This is manifested within you as things which become evident and things which are hidden.

Those who live in and for the exterior world of visual reality know about what is evident. But the inner realities cannot be seen by the eye, nor understood by a worldly mind. One can only do it through divine inspiration. The Lord has kept that knowledge as a secret to separate the men of this world from those who seek and come close to Him. Among these are His prophets and His saints.

Our guide and master, the Prophet Muhammad, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, is totally dependent upon and obedient to his Lord. A mystic saint is someone who is guided by the Prophet and totally obedient to him, who has lighted the lamp of his heart from the

flame in the heart of the Prophet. Such saints are the living proof of the articles of faith which came from the Lord as divine revelation to His Messenger, and from the Messenger to the world.

He is the knot which ties the Lord to His creation. They are the ones who say the Lord exists because we exist: if we did not know that we exist, then we could not know the meaning of existence. The Lord exists: He created us and created knowledge—and knowledge is from Him, for Him and to Him, the All-Knowing One.

So the life of man, also, is from Him and for Him, and the return is to Him. To hear, to see, to speak; power, will, generosity, compassion, the ability to forgive—these are not just words, but are attributes given to man from His attributes. In identifying with these names, man can know himself and know his Lord, for they are attributes common to both.

But all these attributes are hidden inside of us. It is hard—indeed, it is impossible—to raise them into our consciousness and live according to them. If we knew them, then they would not be a secret.

What we know by hearsay about our Lord is that since He is ever-hidden, He is ever-timeless and therefore, placeless, and has no attributes or proofs. But we know that His existence is the beginning of the creation, that He is with the beginning, and that the beginning of knowledge is with Him. The very existence of knowledge is the proof that everything contains its beginning, its origin. Therefore every human being created contains his origin, his creation, and his Creator.

As things transform from one thing to another, they appear in different shapes and pass from one place to another, and finally disappear.

If we consider eternity as an extension of continuity which has a beginning and an end, like life, and if we attribute that to the Lord, so that an idea of living suggests an idea of ever-living, we will construe it falsely.

A concept is always understood either in comparison to something that is similar to it or by contrast to something that is opposite to it.

The oneness and uniqueness of the Lord are thought to be the same as the single beginning that exists for all and everything, but that is an understanding governed by a state which is passive and under the influence of exterior forces. However our master the Prophet Muhammad, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, said, "He who knows himself knows his Lord." In this saying he suggests an active state, one that depends on man's knowledge of the qualities of his Lord. A person's understanding can exist only to the extent of the minute traces of qualities common to both him and his Lord. This is the connection—the only means of knowing the Lord, and of union with Him.

As we see, there are two parallel paths to truth: one passive and one active. The active way necessitates the total annihilation of self for eternal union with God. The passive way is easier, because that which brings us from nothingness to the realization of our existence, the proof of our creation and the purpose of our creation, is the beautiful names of God which He taught to the prophet Adam: His own attributes which He has placed in man.

If these attributes, which connect man to his Creator, were excluded from him, there would be nothing left—no means to know Him, no proof of His existence, no path leading to Him, and no possibility of union with Him.

Without their traces in ourselves, the teaching of God's attributes would have caused terrible disasters for us, because we could have fooled ourselves into thinking that opposite negative characteristics in us were similar to His. Meanwhile the divine names that belong to Him alone render Him perfect and devoid of all imperfection.

There is an inner preparation for all this, which you must do by yourself. To reach the level of detecting the connection between the Lord's attributes and their traces in you, you have to first establish your relation to the universe around you, to see the similarities between the whole of material existence and yourself, to see that man is the microcosm of the macrocosm. You have to trace the order of the heavens within yourself in order to seek the nature and character of each heavenly realm in man.

Know that the whole universe revolves around four heavenly realms: the highest realm, the evolving realm, the self-renewing realm, and the realm of the interrelated worlds. Each of these realms has a purpose and a function.

The highest realm contains twenty truths, realities of the greater universe. The evolving realm holds twenty-five realities of the greater universe, the self-renewing realm has four, and the realm of the interrelated worlds contains ten. All these realities exist also in man. The principal realities particular to the greater universe are thirty-nine. All these are also included in man. Thus, the whole universe has a total of ninety-eight attributes—while man holds one additional special attribute which connects him personally to his Lord, and is a secret between them. It is this which makes the human being fit to be God's deputy on earth. That is why the Lord says, "I

have created everything for you, and you for Myself." That is why all and everything depends on him.

The truths, the attributes, the commands, the beautiful names given to man, are ninety-nine. Whoever realizes these in himself, enters Paradise. But one truth over and above the ninety-nine belongs to the Lord of Power alone, and is His Greatest Name. This one name is the master of all names. Thus, the whole of existence is contained within these hundred names.

Paradise has one hundred levels, and at the hundredth level is the Paradise of sand dunes. There are no rivers of honey and milk, nor fruits which grow as soon as they are picked: it is a Paradise of dreams. No created being can enter this Paradise except the select, called by their Lord to see Him. It is a place of awe and unimaginable amazement. It is man's duty to foresee to which of the hundred levels of Paradise he belongs.

Hell also has a hundred levels. The man who attains these hundred levels during his life reaches the level of total veiling and is rendered blind. Yet the Lord sees him, and will cast him from the hundredth level of Hell until he falls to the level he deserves.

The Creator has created man as the best of His creations and placed him in His highest esteem, but man can reduce himself to worse than the worst, which is the lowest level of Hell. Indeed it is not a place that the Lord wants man, his supreme creation, to inhabit—He has prepared his place at the highest level of Paradise. Why, then, does man aim to reduce himself to the lowest, and deserve the Hell that is not meant for him?

The highest place that God has prepared for man is a place of resolution and moderation. That is where the

truths of Muhammad are gathered, that is the place where man is meant to live, resolved to obey his Lord and to be moderate in everything. Corresponding to that high place meant for humanity there is a place in man which is called the divine soul. It is eternal, because God blew it into the human being from His own soul. It is this divine soul that aspires to live in that place where God meant man to live.

Corresponding to the realm of the Lord's Throne is man's physical body; it aspires to that Throne. Corresponding to the Footstool of the Lord in Heaven is man's ego. The Lord's feet are upon what He praises, what He condemns, and what He forbids, and that is where the ego wants to be. Corresponding to the original Kaaba in the seventh heaven is man's heart. That is what it yearns to be. Corresponding to the angelic realms is man's spirit, and toward these it aspires to evolve.

Corresponding to the heaven of Saturn is the strength of human knowledge; there it aims to rise. Corresponding to the heaven of Jupiter is human memory, at the back of the mind. Corresponding to the heaven of Mars is man's mind and lungs. Corresponding to the Sun is human reason, in the middle of the mind. Corresponding to the heaven of Venus is human imagination and the animal soul. Corresponding to the heaven of Mercury is human creativity, at the front of the mind. Corresponding to the Moon are the five human senses. These are the principles of the higher realm which relate to what is in man.

The evolving realms contain the heaven of fire, where there is no atmosphere. Its nature is hot and dry. It corresponds to the bile in man, the function of which is digestion. The character of the heaven of air is warmth and humidity. It corresponds in man to the living blood, the

source of strength. The world of water corresponds in man to phlegm. It is the force of rejection. Earth, whose nature is cold and dry, corresponds to man's liver, which has the force to hold.

Our own earth is in seven levels. Their colors are white, black, red, yellow, blue, green, and violet, corresponding to the skin, the fat, the flesh, the veins, the nerves, the muscles, and the bones.

Within the self-renewing realms live the creatures with souls. They correspond to the energy in the living man. Within this realm is the world of minerals—existences without life, which correspond in man to whatever in him does not feel or sense. The realm of vegetation corresponds to that which grows out of man. The animal kingdom corresponds to human feelings and emotions.

The interrelated worlds hold the contrasts of light and shade, black and white—the pairs of opposites. Within these is the world of qualities, which corresponds to the right and wrong in man. The world of parts corresponds to youth in man, when he is growing. The world of the moment, the world of things done, corresponds to man's palm. The world of time corresponds to man's face, and the expressions on his face. The world of compound things resembles what is above and below man's waist. The world of situations corresponds to man's faith and words. The world of action resembles man's eating. The world of wrath corresponds to man's satiation and to his violence. The world of differences corresponds to the existence of characteristics in man which do not belong to him, but resemble that which is other than he: it is often said, "he has the memory of an elephant," "he is as obstinate as a donkey," "he is as strong as a lion," "he is as scared as a rabbit."

Now you know how you relate to your environment, and what the interaction is between the human being and the world. You know that when you save yourself from the tyranny of your evil-commanding ego, you will reach the level that honors you. So why is it that you are still a slave to your ego and your imagination?

Your Lord has entrusted to men many of His secrets, and each person takes from this fund in accordance with his nature and character. Few people are able to return to their destined state and attributes. Examples include the prophets and the saints, who are under the guidance and control of divine secrets. That is what happens when the soul of your Lord guides the human soul. People who are directly under the influence of divine secrets do not appear different from the rest of us who worship our Lord and remember Him in our actions.

The Messenger of God, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, described the revelation of these secrets to him. He reported that they came upon him in waves, sounding like waterfalls or things dropped in water, and that the strongest of them sounded like bells. That is the sound of the angelic light in flames, setting on fire the human soul and eliminating that darkness within the human being which is part of his natural constitution. When the divine command thus reaches the soul and sets it afire, the body shakes and trembles, one's natural disposition crumbles. The person changes, for the physical body is affected by the change in the soul. Strange constrictions and contractions appear in it. When the angelic light leaves a human being, the body is drenched in sweat, the face is flushed, but the person is relieved. He returns to his normal state and is happy, as if released from some-

thing which ties him tight. The Lord explains the coming of revelation to those who have been chosen to guide others:

With it came down the spirit of faith and truth
to their heart and mind, that thou mayest
admonish.

(Shu'ara, 193-194)

That is how and why the Holy Qur'an was revealed to the Messenger of God. His secrets entered directly into his heart and mind. They were not told to him by an angel in the shape of a man.

To the saints, those who come close to their Lord, the state of ecstasy, when inspiration comes upon them, starts with a feeling of extreme thirst. They lose themselves in it and pass out. At that moment their thirst is quenched and their constriction is turned into expansion. Then when they return to their normal condition, if they remember anything of what was revealed to them and find themselves in a state of total peace and joy, that is termed divine inspiration. This result depends on the preparation, effort, and previous state of those who are blessed with such inspirations. Some who are not ready to receive this experience think that they are ill—but even in this case, what they have tasted is still truth.

For those whose disposition is such that these inspirations are given to them and they are unable to recall or find anything in them, it simply means that they are not conscious of what they have received. In some cases it is due to a heart too preoccupied with the devotion and remembrance of God, which is set afire by the wish to imagine Him. A mist is raised from the chest up to the

brain, covering it and rendering it unable to see and causing them to faint. That is what happens to some who are in ecstasy, which therefore has no value for them. In fact, if asked, all that they could say would be, "I felt a cloud covering me like a black blanket."

A more dangerous state is one which not only affects you negatively, but also may harm those around you. This usually happens in the circle of mystics during the ceremony of the remembrance of God, when someone thinks that he is in ecstasy, although he still has all his senses. He then imagines that he is receiving some extraordinary knowledge, which brings him to a state of excitement and agitation. This is an evil state created under the influence of demonic imagination. It is also contagious.

Know and beware that the Devil does not have the power to lift the ordinary function of your senses and enable you to see secrets with your inner eye. In the states of false ecstasy, all he can do is to make you imagine strange phenomena. These may be able to induce a state like an epileptic fit, which can only harm you. This process starts with a feeling of heat and a false hope that you will see things hitherto hidden from you. You will discover a voice—which is his voice—which appears to be coming from inside of you. In reality, you will be talking to yourself. This is the voice of your own ambitions for higher spiritual states. You imagine your aspirations realized, and so you take a lie to be the truth.

At other times, the Devil addresses you pretending to be your Lord. You will hear him say, "O my servants, I am your Lord! Do not look at anything but me, or else I will cover you with veils. Always see things with my eyes. If you attempt to look with your own eyes, you will be

attributing partners to your Lord. I am the one who sees, I am the one to be seen." And so you believe that you hear the truth, while falsehood has taken hold in you, and you run the risk of becoming its servant for the rest of your life. If you had only known that the Lord does not speak to His creation either with letters or with sound; cannot be heard with ears; cannot be imagined, whether from the outside or from the inside! Then you would not have been fooled by the words of Satan.

This happens often to many seekers in their worship, contemplation, and meditation. Those who fall victim to their imagination are apt to be condemned to oblivion. It is better to receive nothing than that. Any inspiration which does not bring you or those around you any real knowledge or benefit, is false. When you are aware of that, you are safe from evil influences.

O follower of the mystic path, you have to be heedful and knowledgeable! Your greatest enemy is unconsciousness and ignorance. Learn from your own experiences, rather than from the experiences of others, for others cannot solve your problems. You must do it yourself.

Know that inspirations that come during ecstatic states have no power to command or to forbid. They can only inform—and what is informed should not be from the inspiration itself. If you fall under such an influence, you must observe whether or not it is in accordance with doctrine. If the inspiration leads you to anything that opposes or is outside of the prescriptions of your Lord, you must reject it. Take refuge in the Holy Qur'an and that which it prescribes, for it is the touchstone of truth.

If the ecstatic inspiration is simply a new experience which does not induce you to act against the doctrine

but is only news, then you have to judge for yourself whether it is an evil influence or not. If this news came to you in bits and pieces, in different images, disconnected and not coherent, you must suspect that it is evil. If it becomes coherent in spite of this, then beware that you may be going along with a mischief.

If the inspiration is neither symbolic nor allegorical, but directly affects your heart without affecting your senses or imagination, then it is apt to be true. For instance, if you feel in a state of awe and grace, without having seen anything; or you find clarified some teaching which you have hitherto not been able to understand; or if you meet with a reinforcement of good morals, or answers to pressing questions or needs; or if you discover a sense of unity within yourself, and other such secrets—you can be sure that these experiences are beneficial and therefore true.

There are jewels in man which have influences on him. The jewel of awe and marvel, the finest of these jewels, is in the center of the human heart. It is where the essence of the being is hidden, a store of energy and power. In that dark hidden place many an unknown secret is kept. Although others cannot see it, it sees that which is beyond the eye, for it is the eye of the heart. It is said that the Lord has hidden a moment in the middle of Friday, among the days and hours of the week, when all prayers are accepted. That spot in the center of the human being, in his heart, is like that moment: a black spot.

The Messenger of God, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, said that to him, this dot in the heart, like the moment in the middle of Friday, resembles a mirror.

Every element of consciousness within the human being—the senses, the feelings, the mind—is constantly

watching that spot in the heart in order to see, to hear, to touch reality.

When the heart shines with the remembrance of God as a result of sincere contemplation, meditation, and worship, divine truth is reflected in it on the surface of that spot, for that spot belongs to the kingdom of your Lord. Then an intense light is generated from it, a light which reaches to the deepest corners of the whole being, and the whole being is conscious and in awe. Then not a single member of the human being will move on its own, for none has its own will any longer. That is why that dot at the center of the heart is called the essence, the jewel of awe and marvel. Its effect is overwhelming and paralyzing.

If your Lord wills to keep you in a state of intense wish to reach Him, then he sends a mist and places it between your heart and that light which generates from the essence of the heart and spreads into the being. That mist reflects the light in the opposite direction. It covers the heart, thus permitting all the souls within the being to wonder in their places, seeking the light behind the mist, hoping that it will not disappear. This state is the state of repose, the normal state of people who believe that God is invisible, is unlike anything that He has created, and is hidden from His creation. In that state, attributes common to both Lord and creature are different from each other. Yet the yearning persists.

You will hear some people say, "I was not with my Lord, until I saw the traces of His beautiful face," or, "Who else but the Lord puts faith in His servant's heart?" It is the voice of that spot in the heart. It is only there that the face of the Beloved will be seen. The Lord says:

When the awe is removed from their hearts
will they say: what is it that your Lord com-
manded? They will say: that which is the truth.
(*Saba*, 23)

The character of those who are in that state endures
as long as that mystery, and the yearning for it, is in their
hearts. They cannot be tempted, nor are they deeply inter-
ested in anything that the world presents them, for they are
above these influences. Nor would they expose themselves
to the world and its influences.

Some jewels in the material world have particular
characteristics, symbols of that jewel of the heart.

The emerald is the symbol of the power of remem-
brance in man. God says in the Holy Qur'an:

Those who fear God, when a thought of evil
from Satan assaults them, bring God to remem-
brance when, lo, they see!
(*A'raf*, 200)

The power of the remembrance of God renders
Satan blind. He can no longer see the trap which he was
about to set for you—and it frightens him, when he cannot
see his victim. If the believer falls back into heedlessness
after remembering His Lord, which saved him from the
Devil, the Devil will try him again. But if he is in continu-
ous remembrance, he is with the One whom he remem-
bers, and the Devil cannot come into the presence of the
Lord, for he will burn to ashes.

The red ruby is the symbol of what God says in the
Holy Qur'an:

There is nothing whatever like unto Him.
(*Shura*, 11)

If one's sacred secret soul could view what this
jewel represents, it is said that it could obtain knowledge
about the reality of certain things without even seeing
them. The viewing of this stone leads to something differ-
ent if one looks at it under the influence of one's ego: then
one might be moved to submit to a tyrant who comes one's
way.

The value of the sapphire is that it represents that
which is meant in God's words:

There is none to put back His command.
(*Ra'd*, 41)

That power of God's command, which cannot be undone by
any other power, is entrusted to some men who will rule
others. That power is innate and from birth.

The topaz is the symbol of God's declaration:

But God has created you and your handiwork.
(*Saffat*, 96)

It is the symbol of those who come close to their Lord,
humbly and in need, realizing that neither they them-
selves, nor what they have done, belongs to them.

The clear diamond represents water, about which
God says:

We made from water every living thing.
(*Anbiya'*, 30)

Water is the essential element in everything. It has the power to change things which are similar. It is that which is common to everything. It is the truth in everything, around everything—yet when it flows from one thing to the other, it separates one from the other. It is the essential element in alchemy, and can change iron into silver, or copper and lead into gold. In living things it has the same effect. It is able to transform someone who is in revolt against his Lord into an obedient servant, and an unbeliever into a believer.

Red sulfur is an element that God has created for those who are closest and most loyal to Him. It is an element of great powers and great value. Whoever can attain it will not find it in himself. The one who obtains even a trace of it becomes terribly possessive and jealous of it.

There are dark shadows cast upon man which hide him, and noises which prevent him from being heard. God says:

Then we draw it towards Ourselves—a contraction by easy stages.

(Furqan, 46)

Meaning, then He lifts the shadows from around man, one by one, by shedding His light shed upon him, just as the sunlight gradually replaces the darkness of the night.

These shadows have a function. They hide the ugliness and that which is shameful in man. If you do not have the beautiful jewels within you, then it is a sin to uncover and expose yourself. That is the time when a guide is necessary, to help. If you cannot find a guide, seclude yourself in a place away from men, remember God and call unto

Him by His name. Fast, and avoid the tastes of this world, and count upon the meaning in the verse in the Holy Qur'an:

There is nothing whatever like unto Him.

(Shura, 11)

Stay in that state seven days and nights at least, forty days at most. Then perchance you will uncover the jewels in you, and then the veils of darkness will leave you.

To rid yourself of the noise which renders one deaf, God says:

For, without doubt, in the remembrance of God do hearts find peace and satisfaction.

(Ra'd, 28)

This noise is the noise of the wind and storm that your ego causes to be raised between the angelic influences and the world in which you live. The storm can only be quieted, and your heart find peace, through the remembrance of God.

CHAPTER 18

ABOUT THE MIND AND THE LIGHT OF CERTAINTY THAT ENLIGHTENS THE HEART

The Earth does not have its own light, yet when the Sun is reflected upon it, it shines and is lighted, and the Sun cannot cast a shadow upon it to darken it. And the Sun shines upon the Moon, making it visible to the earth. The eye yearns for the source of light, but you cannot look upon it, for it will blind you. When you see light reflected upon the Earth, it is as if you have seen the Sun. Here are three points of a triangle: the Sun, the source of light; the Earth, upon which its light falls; and the Moon, which becomes visible with the light of the Sun.

Know that the physical body, which is the domain of the animal self, is made of coarse matter, like the Earth. Yet the light from the heart, which is the domain of the human soul, reaches to the farthest corner of the body, and from there is reflected upon the mind, where the inner eye starts to see.

Just as daylight enables the eye of the head to see, so heart-light shining upon the inner eye makes man worthy to be addressed by his Lord. He says:

Verily in this is a message for any that has a heart.

(Qaf, 37)

In this state the senses have no more use, for the

light by which the inner eye sees is far brighter than that by which the eyes of the head see.

What is now seen is the awesome sight of the angelic realm. Then—light upon light—a second eye of the heart opens. This is the eye of certainty, the eye that sees true reality. With this eye you can look upon the source of light itself, which is called the light of certainty.

There are two divine lights that come from your Lord: one shines upon the path of knowledge and wisdom, and the other shines upon the path that leads to Him. He has created two inner eyes in your heart: one is the eye of understanding, and the other is the eye that guides you to salvation. He says:

God doth guide whom He wills to His light.
(*Nur*, 35)

That light by which He guides you is the light of certainty. This will guide you to the path to Paradise, for He says:

He will provide for you a light by which ye
shall walk [straight to Paradise].
(*Hadid*, 28)

If the source of light is added to the light shed upon the path of guidance, it will make visible all the hitherto unseen angelic beings in the heavens and on earth. These are the angels who are the agents of your Lord, who carry His secret commands of your destiny. God explains this divine light as:

Light upon light . . .
(*Nur*, 35)

CHAPTER 19

ON THE VEILS WHICH HIDE THE ANGELIC REALM FROM THE SIGHT OF THE EYE OF THE HEART

There are three lights within man: besides the light of the mind and the light of certainty, there is also the light of life.

The light of life is the light which energizes the animal self in man. Three influences weaken it and render it impotent. These influences manifest themselves as a terrible ringing noise, which deafens; a veil that blinds the eye; and a veil that blinds the mind. All three are mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. They are caused by the influence of the material world upon man's ego. Then the ego, in turn, renders the heart sick.

When the heart is sick, the mind radiates a beam of light upon it to immunize the heart against the tyranny of the ego. But while burning the maleficence of the ego, it also burns the heart—and the heart, on fire, is covered by the dark smoke which it generates. This smoke separates the heart from the mind, breaking all communication between them. Thus the heart is darkened. It is this dark cloud fallen upon the heart which becomes a blinding veil. Let your conscience be the judge of the devastation caused by a blind heart.

That which puts out the light of certainty and obscures the sight of the eye of the heart is lack of sincerity, lack of trust, faithlessness, and an inability to

distinguish right from wrong. The resistance to these ills is within the range of human possibility. With intention and effort and God's permission, they can be cured. That will restore health to the heart, and produce peace of heart. Then light upon light enters—and with it, miraculous signs are seen. For the heart becomes a mirror where God's light is reflected. He says:

God is the light of the Heavens and the Earth.
(*Nur*, 35)

and:

For any to whom God giveth not light, there is no light.
(*Nur*, 40)

and He promises to the ones to whom He has given light:

An evident sign for any people who understand.
(*'Ankabut*, 35)

CHAPTER 20

ON THE HIDDEN TABLET WHERE THE ESSENCE OF THE HOLY QUR'AN IS KEPT

The Hidden Tablet is a level where proof of all that is true and denial of all that is false is written. It is a place where the prophets, the messengers, and the saints meet, and where they are separated and distinguished from one another.

The Creator has made the Pen the interpreter of the ink-well. With it He drew the forms and shapes of all that was to be known, and wrote out their names. He is the one who composed the mother of all books, and set right what is in it. He is the one who knows whatever will be known by man and whatever will be kept from him. He, the All-Powerful, is the one who acts upon what is written in the Book. He wrote it Himself, yet He looks into it each time He acts.

The front, the back, the edges of the Hidden Tablet are made out of green emerald. They look like the ever-changing days within the created universe, its ever-changing reality. All around it are angels of unimaginable beauty, worshipping, facing it.

You have your own pen given into your hand from the Pen in the hand of your Lord. That pen is your faith, which writes different things day by day, while that which is on the Hidden Tablet changes. And day by day, different things happen. Whatever is written and happened today erases what happened yesterday and will happen

tomorrow. This is the proof of the reality and truth of the moment of Now. It is the denial of the memory of yesterday and the expectation of tomorrow. If that which is erased is to be reconstituted, it will happen in heavens far above, reentering the Divine Pen in the hand of the Lord. The prophets may inherit that Pen, but it is not for your hand. The pen in the hand of the prophets has two dimensions, while the pen given into the hands of those close to their Lord has only one.

The knowers of God and the sincere believers are themselves written in this Tablet. Some are privileged to have their names on the top of the page, and are above the ones whose names are written under them. Further than that, God the All-Knowing knows best.

CHAPTER 21

ON WHIRLING DERVISHES AND ON WHIRLING AS A MEANS TO COME CLOSE TO GOD

Whirling is a secret among the divine secrets of the Lord, who is highest, without limit, and who is unique and other than everything that He has created. It is an exercise performed by mystics in order to feel and hear their Beloved.

Those who wish to penetrate this secret and participate in the ceremony of whirling do what they do in one of two ways. Some whirl in an ecstatic state, and some others whirl under the influence of their minds. There is no third way. If someone says, "I whirl to reach the consciousness of my Lord," the highest stage he can reach is with his mind. That, in itself, may be accomplished in two ways: first, in accordance with the natural character of the mind; and second, through the mind's dependence on the acquired personality.

The example of the first is when somebody says, "I whirl to hear my Lord." Then he may indeed hear, for as the Messenger of God says: "When the servant of God comes close to Him, God becomes his ears with which he hears."

Sometimes, under the influence of one's mind, one whirls with every part of one's being, excluding nothing, while intending to be conscious that all and everything is whirling. Then one is not attached to any one place or to any one thing. When one is able to do that, the sign of it is that the whole body is frozen like a statue while whirling with the awe and marvel of the things it observes.

Those who whirl in an ecstatic state are under the influence of the beautiful music and rhythm which accompany this exercise. From the outside, they look like beautiful dancers. They are well coordinated with the accompanying music, and their faces show a serene expression, as if they have taken leave of all their senses. Even if this looks very beautiful, the performer has become a clown in the hands of the Devil. The best of it is if that person becomes unconscious in his whirling, without purpose, without decision, and without feeling it happening. Then there is some benefit, some truth in his state—indicating only that he is a person with a self, and is under the influence of it.

Those who wish to lose themselves in God through the exercise of whirling should know that if one truly reaches that state, what happens afterwards does not occur through one's own efforts, nor is it the result of some knowledge attained through the exercise. If someone claims that the high result is produced by knowledge attained during whirling, he is not telling the truth—for if that is what happened to him, he did not really lose himself.

The ones who claim to whirl in an ecstatic state are aware of their own motion—therefore they are whirling under the command of their egos, for themselves. That is not an exercise controlled by the mind. In whirling influenced by the mind, there is no motion, nor any coordination of previous knowledge with motion. Whoever whirls and claims that he has brought knowledge and motion together ignores the truth and is lying to himself.

Know that if God, the All-Knowing, is going to bestow knowledge and wisdom upon the heart of one of His servants, He will choose someone who has attached

himself to his Lord sincerely, selflessly, and with infinite love of Him—and with a totally cool rationality. It is this rationality that cools the heaven of the heart, causing it to descend, while the natural warmth of the mind rises to meet it. Then there is a meeting of the heart and the mind. Then they ascend together in spite of the pull of the self—and like thunder, caused by the clash of the cold and the warm, screams issue from the inner being.

When the fire overwhelms the cold and keeps him rising, the one who whirls feels a burning in his chest, and may even smell the fire of yearning. Then the heart floats in the void. There is a moaning sound and a scream, unheard by any but those who have the reflection of divine power in their hearts. They are affected by it and feel a stillness and stiffness in their bodies. That is the sound of the heart set afire, spreading to the hearts of others.

Some deny the existence of such state. They say that they have never seen it, nor ever heard that such a thing existed. Yet our Master the Prophet of God, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, used to receive such states continuously, while he neither screamed, nor moaned, nor showed any physical signs. Therefore, O follower of this path, do not listen to the words of these deniers, because their hearts have been sealed.

Thus we have explained the ways of sacred whirling as a means to come close to one's Lord:

When the fire rises from within and meets the cool clouds, which are too cold to allow it to continue its ascent, it becomes confined within the heart and lungs, and burns them. This may cause death. Or it may be led to the mind from the heart, and heat the mind. Then the one who is

whirling moves far too fast, starts jumping, and produces a movement disharmonious and unbalanced.

The right motion is to turn in good measure around the axis of the body. Man is created round, not like a cube, and the natural movement of a sphere is around its axis. When the mist rising inside the whirler is a fine mist that spreads to all parts of the body, it becomes the air that the fire needs in order to breathe. Then no storm or thunder is created within the one who performs this mystical exercise. No sound comes from him, not even the beating of his heart. The only expression of this state is a beatitude and a slight smile on the face, an expression of peace due to the comfort of the purity and expansiveness of his inner atmosphere.

O follower of the mystic path, now you know the way. Whether you whirl for yourself or whirl with your mind, do not fool yourself. May God lead us all to the straight path and render us pure and sincere.

IBN 'ARABI

What the Seeker Needs

*Kitab Kunh ma la budda
minhu lil-murid*